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THE RELIGIOUS LIFE OF INDIA

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THE purpose of this series of small volumes on the leading forms which religious life has taken in India is to produce really reliable information for the use of all who are seeking the welfare of India. Editor and writers alike desire to work in the spirit of the best modern science, looking only for the truth. But, while doing so and seeking to bring to the interpretation of the systems under review such imagination and sympathy as characterize the best study in the domain of religion to-day, they believe they are able to shed on their work fresh light drawn from the close religious intercourse which they have each had with the people who live by the faith herein described ; and their study of the relevant literature has in every instance been largely supplemented by persistent questioning of those likely to be able to give information. In each case the religion described is brought into relation with Christianity. It is believed that all readers in India at least will recognize the value of this practical method of bringing out the salient features of Indian religious life.



THE RELIGIOUS LIFE OF INDIA

THE VILLAGE GODS OF SOUTH INDIA

BY THE
RIGHT REVEREND HENRY WHITEHEAD, D.D.,
BISHOP OF MADRAS

SECOND EDITION, REVISED AND ENLARGED

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PREFACE

THE material for this account of the village gods of South India has been gathered almost entirely from my own observation and inquiry. I have been able to get little help from books, as this is, I think, the first attempt at dealing systematically with this aspect of Indian religion. It does not pretend to be anything like an exhaustive account of all the various rites and ceremonies observed in the worship of the village deities. The variety of ritual and ceremonial in the different districts of South India is almost endless, and I have not attempted in this book to give an account even of all the various ceremonies that have come within my own knowledge. Perhaps it would be more correct to call the book "An Introduction to the Study of the Village Gods of South India." I believe, however, that all the main types of this particular form of Hinduism are included in the following pages, and that enough has been said to enable the reader to get a fairly complete idea of its general character and to compare it with similar forms of religion in other parts of the world.

X L I have to acknowledge the kindness of the Editor of *The Nineteenth Century and After* for allowing me to reprint in Chapters IV, VI, and VII portions of articles contributed by me to that Magazine. I owe the drawings from which illustrations have been made to Mrs. Whitehead; while Miss Stephen, the Archdeacon

of Madras, and other friends have most kindly supplied me with the photographs used for that purpose; and the Government of Madras has generously allowed me to use the plates for some of the illustrations which previously appeared in a bulletin that I wrote some years ago for the Madras Museum.

A Glossary of Indian Terms and several Indices have been included in order to facilitate reference to the large amount of unfamiliar detail which the book contains.

HENRY MADRAS.

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INTRODUCTION

THE worship of the village gods is the most ancient form of Indian religion. Before the Aryan invasion, which probably took place in the second millennium B.C. the old inhabitants of India, who are sometimes called Dravidians, were a dark-skinned race, with religious beliefs and customs that probably did not greatly differ from those of other primitive races. They believed the world to be peopled by a multitude of spirits, good and bad, who were the cause of all unusual events, and especially of diseases and disasters. The object of their religion was to propitiate these innumerable spirits. At the same time, each village seems to have been under the protection of some one spirit, who was its guardian deity. Probably these village deities came into being at the period when the people began to settle down in agricultural communities. We may see in them the germs of the national deities which were so prominent among the Semitic races and the great empires of Egypt, Nineveh, and Babylon. Where the family developed into a clan, and the clan into a tribe, and the tribe into a nation, and the nation into a conquering empire, the god of the family naturally developed into an imperial deity. But in ancient India, before the coming of the Aryans, the population seems to have been split up into small agricultural and pastoral communities. There were no nations and no conquering empires. And it was not till the Aryan invaders had conquered North India and had settled down in the country that there was in India any growth of philosophic thought about the world as a whole. The problems of the universe did not interest the simple Dravidian folk. They only looked for an

explanation of the facts and troubles of village life. Their religion, therefore, did not advance beyond a crude animism and belief in village deities. Later on, after the Aryans had overrun a large part of India, and the Brahmans had established their ascendancy as a priestly caste the old Dravidian cults were influenced by the superior religion of the Aryans, and strongly reacted on them in turn.

The earliest Indian philosophical systems arose in the sixth century B.C. under the stimulus of the desire to escape from transmigration. Two of these developed into new religious beliefs to Hinduism, namely Jainism and Buddhism, while others remained in the old faith. All exercised a profound influence on the thought of India and also modified religious practice in certain respects. On the other hand the crude ideas and barbarous cults of the omnipresent aboriginal tribes constantly pressing upon the life of the Aryans, found entrance into their religion at many points. Thus the old polytheistic nature-worship of the *Asvins* with its animal sacrifices offered in the open air and its simple healthy rules for family and social life was gradually transformed into a great mass of warring sects holding philosophical ideas and subtle theological systems and undertaking animal sacrifice yet worshipping gross idols and bound by innumerable superstitions. Caste arose and became hardened into the most rigorous system of class distinctions that the world has ever seen, inspired and justified by the doctrine of transmigration and karma.

What we now call Hinduism therefore is a strange medley of the most diverse forms of religion, ranging from the most subtle and abstruse systems of philosophy to primitive forms of animism. At the same time the primitive forms of Dravidian religion have been in their turn greatly modified by Brahman influence. For the most part, the same people in town and village worship the village deities and the Brahman gods. There are a few aboriginal tribes in some of the hill tracts who are still unaffected by Brahman ideas or

customs, but in the vast majority of the districts the worship of the village deities and the worship of Śiva and Viṣṇu go on side by side just as in China Confucianism and Taoism are not rival religions but complementary creeds.

The student of comparative religion the study of the word rites and ceremonies connected with the propitiation of the village deities is interesting because it reveals many points of contact with primitive forms of religion in other lands and also because it enables the student to see these primitive religious ideas in very different stages of development. To the Christian the study has a still greater interest because among their repulsive features these rites contain primitive ideas and yearnings which find their satisfaction in the highest truths of Christianity.

In the second edition I have tried to remedy defects and omissions that have been kindly pointed out by reviewers and some chapters have been rearranged. It has been difficult however to know where to stop when attempting to supply omissions. The number of different gods and goddesses worshipped all over South India is enormous and the variety of local customs almost infinite. It is inevitable therefore that a large number of deities and customs which are both interesting and important should be omitted in a small book that can only aim at being a brief introduction to a vast subject.

The chapter on the probable origin of the worship of village gods (Ch. VIII) has naturally provoked the most criticism. In the former chapters I have stated what I have heard and seen myself. In this chapter I rashly entered the land of conjecture and framed a hypothesis as to what may have happened about 750 years ago. Naturally I have laid myself open to attack. But in spite of the criticisms that have been made on my theory I do not feel inclined to give it up, though it must necessarily remain incapable of proof. I am still of opinion that the Indus theory of the origin of the sacrifices to the grama-devatās, or village

professions as distinct from the offerings made to the spirits of ancestors or other deities as in the whole most in accordance with the facts. Professor Elmslie in his able and most interesting book *Dravidian Gods as Modern Hinduism*, outlines the totemistic theory of the origin of the buffalo-worship which is the most important of the early forms. He holds the grama devatas, on three grounds, mainly because the existing stories current amongst the people suggest a historical origin for the rites. Professor Elmslie has taken from these stories that the goddess symbolises the dire punishment arising out of a conquered enemy. The cutting off of the head the putting the tongue in the mouth the smearing of the nose with fat and the putting of a lighted lamp upon the forehead are in this theory intended to express the supreme humiliation of a forced, degraded and defeated enemy. In the procession of the buffalo with a gamana and its path through the village before the sacrifice is described as "the remembrance of the triumph, procession in which the enemy was exhibited before the living wife death." The sacrifice therefore represents the triumph of the Aryans over the Dravidian aborigines and their "dead gods."

I must confess that this explanation seems to me very far fetched and improbable and entirely out of the width of that we know about the origin and meaning of sacrifice and ritual among other peoples and it is open to the fatal objection that it supposes as to assume that these buffalo-worships originated at a comparatively late date long after the Aryan invasion of North India and subsequent to the advance of the Aryans into South India when the struggle with the Dravidians was over and the triumph of the Aryans assured. The stories which I have given in Chapter VI and those which Professor Elmslie gives in his book to support his theory obviously belong to the time when the Pariahs of North India, who were originally a leading class among the Dravidians, had been dethroned from their position and reduced to a state of servitude

and degradation by Brāhman influences. But it seems to me quite clear that the worship of the grāma-devatās and the buffalo-sacrifice belong to a very much older period than this, and go back to the days long before the Aryan invasion, probably to the time when the Dravidian clans first came to India and settled down to an agricultural life. If that is true, it is impossible to interpret the meaning of rites and ceremonies which originated about 3000 or 4000 B.C. at the latest, by the light of legends which represent historical events that took place about three thousand years later.

Again, in view of the facts that agricultural deities all over the world have been mainly female, and that many of the rites and ceremonies connected with the worship of the grāma-devatās are obviously related to the harvest, I must still maintain my opinion that the reason why the grāma-devatās are female is because they were originally agricultural deities. Professor Elmore's view, that the Dravidian deities are female because the Dravidian women were specially quarrelsome, vindictive and jealous, and that their tempers and curses made people feel that it was wise to propitiate female spirits, seems to me a very improbable explanation, even if it were certain that Dravidian women were as much "adepts in the use of bad languages and vigorous terms of defamation" six thousand years ago as some of them are to-day.

CHAPTER I

LEADING FEATURES OF THE RELIGION

THE worship of the Village Deity or *grāma-devatā*, as it is called in Sanskrit and in Tamil forms an important part of the conglomerate of religious beliefs, customs, and ceremonies which are generally classed together under the term Hinduism. In almost every village and town of South India may be seen a shrine or symbol of the *grāma-devatā*, and in every village the *grāma-devatā* is periodically worshipped and propitiated. As a rule this shrine is far less imposing than the Brāhmanical temples in the neighbourhood, very often it is nothing more than a small brick building three or four feet high, or a small enclosure with a few rough stones in the centre, and often there is no shrine at all; but still, when calamity overtakes the village, when pestilence or famine or cattle disease makes its appearance it is to the village deity that the whole body of the villagers turn for protection. Śiva and Viṣṇu may be more dignified beings, but the village deity is regarded as a more present help in trouble, and is more intimately concerned with the happiness and prosperity of the villagers.

(a) *The origin of this form of Hinduism is lost in antiquity, but it is certain that it represents a pre-Aryan cult of the Dravidian peoples, more or less modified in various parts of South India by Brāhmanical influence, and some details of the ceremonies seem to point back to a totemistic stage of religion. The normal function of the *grāma-devatā* is the guardianship of the village, but many of them are believed to*

have other powers, especially in relation to disease and calamity.

(1) The village deities and their worship are widely different from the principal Hindu deities Śiva and Viṣṇu and the worship that centres in the great Hindu temples.

1 Śiva and Viṣṇu represent forces of nature. Śiva symbolises the power of destruction and the idea of life through death. Viṣṇu the power of preservation and the idea of salvation. Both these deities and the system of religion connected with them are the outcome of philosophic reflection on the universe as a whole. But the village deities on the other hand have no relation to the universe. They symbolise only the facts of village life. They are related, not to great world forces, but to such simple facts as cholera, small pox, and cattle disease.

2 Then, in the second place village deities with very few except one or two, Śiva and Viṣṇu, and the principal deities of the Hindu pantheon are male. Their wives it is true play an important part in Hindu religious life. Kali especially the black one, the wife of Śiva, is the presiding deity of Calcutta, and is one of the chief deities of Bengal—but speaking generally in the Hindu pantheon the male deities are predominant and the female deities occupy a subordinate position. This is characteristic of the genius of the Aryan religion, but in the old Dravidian cult a leading feature was the worship of the female principle in nature. It is possible that this is due to the fact that the Aryan deities were the gods of a race of warriors, whereas the Dravidian deities were the goddesses of an agricultural people. All over the world the gods of war are mostly male while the agricultural deities are, for the most part female, and this naturally arises from the fact that war is the business of men whereas, among primitive peoples, the cultivation of the soil was largely left to the women, and also from the fact that the idea of fertility is naturally connected with the female. All over Southern India, therefore, the

village deities are almost exclusively female. In the Tamil country it is true most of them have male attendants who are supposed to guard the shrines and carry out the commands of the goddesses, but their place is distinctly subordinate and almost servile. One of these male deities, however, *Iyēnar*, has an independent position. He generally has a shrine to himself, and is regarded as the night war-boss of the village. The compound of his shrine is generally crowded with clay figures of horses, great and small, on which he is supposed to ride round the village during the watches of the night, to keep off evil spirits. In the Telugu country too, there is a being called *Potu-Rasa*, who figures sometimes as the brother, sometimes as the husband, of the village goddess, and sometimes as merely an attendant, but I have never met him as an independent deity and have always been told that sacrifice is never offered to him alone but only in conjunction with one or more of the goddesses.

3. Then in the third part the village deities are almost universally worshipped with animal sacrifices. Buffalo, sheep, goats, pigs, and fowls are freely offered to them sometimes in thousands. In the Tamil country this custom is curiously modified by the influence of Brahmanism, which has imposed the villagers with the idea that the shedding of blood is low and irreverent, and the remarkable fact that no animal sacrifices are ever offered to *Iyēnar*. The male attendants except them eagerly and take toddy and cheroots into the bargain, but *Iyēnar* is regarded as far too good a being to be pleased by the sight of bloodshed.

4. Again, the *poorais* or the priestly ministrants, the men who perform the *poorai*, or the worship, are not Brahmins, but are drawn from all the other castes.

* The whole Hindu people in North India may be likened to a great step-mountain, consisting of five strata. These are as five groups marked off from each other by deep distinctions in religious and social standing and in idea, function

It is hardly ever possible to make any general statement about any subject in India without at once being confronted with facts which seem to prove that you are wrong, accordingly, I may mention that I have found cases where Brāhmanas officiate as pūjāris at the shrines of village deities. I came across one such case at Negapatam, while, at Bangalore, I actually found a case where a Brāhman widow was the ministrant. About three miles from Tanjore, too, there is a temple of Mariamma served by Brāhman priests. But no animal sacrifices are offered at the central shrine where Brāhmanas minister. In one corner of the temple area there is a separate shrine with an image of Mariamma where animals are regularly sacrificed but at this shrine no Brāhmanas officiate. I believe that it is the only temple or shrine of Mariamma in South India where there are Brāhman priests. But then, in these cases the Brāhman pūjāri never has anything to do with animal sacrifices. These are always conducted entirely by men of lower castes, and, even so, it is a degradation for a Brāhman to be connected as pūjāri with a shrine where such abominations take place, but, according to the Indian proverb, 'For the sake of one's stomach one must play many parts.' Setting aside these exceptional cases, it may be stated generally that no

Brāhmanas: priests

Kshatriyas: kings and warriors

Vaishyas: farmers and tradesmen

Śūdras: servants

Outcastes: Panchamas (or Śūdras of fifth class) men &c.

{ In North India these three groups are held to be of pure Aryan blood and called twice-born

{ Aborigines reckoned pure and admitted to the temples

{ Unclean, untouchable aborigines

Foreigners are held unclean, and are called mlechhas. In South India it is to be noticed the farmers, artisans and tradesmen are all classed as Śūdras and the Kshatriyas are practically non-existent. The population, therefore, is divided into three main groups: the Brāhmanas of Aryan blood, the Śūdras who are Dravidians, admitted to the temples, and the Outcastes, who are partly Dravidians and partly still older inhabitants not admitted to the temples.

Brahmans are the priests of village deities, but that the pictures are drawn from all other castes indiscriminately, while an important part in the worship especially that connected with the buffalo sacrifices, is even taken by Outcastes. As will be seen later on, the buffalo-sacrifice has special features of its own and seems to retain traces of a primitive form of worship, which may possibly have originated in totemism.

In addition to the grāma-devatās, who are in a special sense the village deities, there are a large number of spirits of all kinds, male and female who are worshipped by the villagers. The worship of departed ancestors played an important part in the old Dravidian religion and is still universal all over South India. Men and women, boys and girls, who have died violent or untimely deaths, or who have been notorious for their power or even their crimes, are frequently worshipped after death. It is probable that a large proportion of these gods have been revered for centuries, but many are of quite recent origin. Some were originally people who were murdered, or who during their lifetime were feared for their power or their crimes, or women who died in child birth. It is easy to characterise a deity in the making even at the present day.

A district superintendent of police in the Telugu country told me that in 1864 at a village some twelve miles from Eluru two little boys, milking cattle in the fields, thought they heard the sound of trumpets proceeding from an ant-hill. They told the story in the village and at once the people turned out and did pūjā to the deity in the ant-hill. The fame of the deity's presence spread like wildfire far and wide and the village became the centre of pilgrimages from all the country round about. Every Sunday as many as 5,000 people, men and women, assembled before the ant-hill, and might be seen prostrate on their faces, kept in abhorrence. The incident illustrates the ease with which a local cult springs up in India and suddenly becomes popular over a large district.

Another instance came to my notice a few years ago at Beawala. A small boy the son of wealthy parents was murdered near the town for the sake of his ornaments and thrown into the canal. The body was discovered and placed under a tree near the bank of the canal at a place where three roads meet. A little after a small shrine about a foot and a half high, was built by the parents under a tree to the spirit of the murdered boy. Then some one declared that he had made a vow at the shrine and obtained his desire. The fame of the shrine at once spread, the spirit of the boy rose quite to the rank of a minor deity, and a local worship speedily sprang up and became popular. When I last saw the shrine it had been enlarged and had become about twice its original size.

About sixty years ago a Hindu widow named Rāmamma lived between Beawala and Hyderabad, farming some land left her by her husband. After a time she contracted intimate relations with one of her servants Bakha Sahib. Her brother was so angry that he murdered them both. Then the cattle plague broke out and the villagers connected it with the wrath of the murdered Rāmamma, and instituted special rites to pacify her spirit. And now whenever there is cattle plague in the district two rough wooden images, about two feet high are made to represent Mākha Rāmamma and Bakha Sahib and, with two images of low goddesses as their attendants are put on a small wooden cart and dragged in procession at night round all the principal streets of the village even joined by fireworks, music, and *naach & guls* (i.e. dancing & guls of loose character connected with Hindu temples). Finally the cart is dragged to the boundary of the village lands and thrown into the territory of the adjacent village in order to transfer to it the angry spirit of Rāmamma.

Temples have been built to Plague annas during the last ten years, as a result of the prevalence of plague.

Special reverence is paid to persons who come to

an untimely end, *e.g.* to the spirits of girls who die before marriage, but when the circumstances of their death specially strikes the imagination of the general public, the reverence which is ordinarily confined to the family expands into a regular local cult.

Then, again, there is the spirit of the boundary stone, the spirits of hills and rivers, forests and trees, the deities of particular arts and crafts, who are worshipped by particular classes of the population. The worship of serpents, especially the deadly cobra, is common all over South India. In one village of the Wynaad I came across a Mission school which was visited almost daily by a large cobra, which glided undisturbed and harmless through the school-room. Neither teachers nor pupils would have dared to kill it. Constantly they fed it with milk. In many towns and villages large slabs of stone with figures of cobras, often two cobras intertwined, carved in bas-relief are seen on a platform under a large tree. They are worshipped especially by women who want children.

CHAPTER II

NAMES, CHARACTERS, AND FUNCTIONS OF THE VILLAGE GODS

(a) THE names of village deities are legion. Some of them have an obvious meaning many are quite unintelligible to the people themselves, and I have often failed to get any clue to their origin, even from native pandits. They differ in almost every district, and often the deities worshipped in one village will be quite unknown in other villages five or six miles off. In Masulipatam on the East Coast, in the Telugu country, the following were given me as the names of the village deities worshipped in the district, viz Mutyalamma, the pearl goddess (*amma* or *ammai* is only a female termination) Chinnintamma, the goddess who is head of the house Challalamma, the goddess presiding over buttermilk, Ghantalamma, the goddess who goes with bells, Yaparamma, the goddess who transacts business, Mamallamma, the goddess who sits under a mango tree, Gangamma, the water goddess, who in this district is the protectress against small-pox.

But, at a village about twenty miles from Masulipatam, I found that fifteen different goddesses were worshipped in the neighbourhood, of whom only four were identical with those of Masulipatam. Some were named after the villages from which they had been imported, e.g. Addankamma, the goddess from Addanki, and Pandilamma, the goddess from Pandil, others had names derived from common objects of country life, e.g. Wanamaamma, the goddess of the tope, Balamma, the goddess of the cart, and Sitalamma, the water goddess.

In the Ellore district, farther west, the deities

worshipped are chiefly Gaṅgamma, who is sometimes called Mahalakshmi (one of the names of Viṣṇu's wife), and sometimes Chāmalamma (another name of Kālī the wife of Śiva), and Pōlamma, the boundary goddess, and Anḱamma, who is regarded as the goddess of cholera and disease generally.

Farther west than Elōre, across the hills, in the Cuddapah and Kurnool districts, the village goddess is often known simply as Peddamma (great goddess) or Chinamma ('little goddess'). In many villages, however, of these districts these names are unknown and the village deities are called Gaṅgamma, Pōlamma, and Sunkamma, etc. In some villages the village deities consist of Potu-Rān and his seven sisters, who are known by various names. In one village they were given me as Peddamma, Isondamma, Maramma, Anḱamma, Nukamma, Vārukota, Elamma, and Arikamma.

Again, Kālamma or Kālī is said to be the only one of the village goddesses whose name is found in the Vedas. She is an *avātara*, or incarnation of the eight powers of the universe. The story told about her is that a demon named Mahiṣāsurā (the buffalo demon) gave great offence to Śiva, and was condemned to death. But, owing to a privilege bestowed on him by Śiva himself, he could not be slain by the Trimūrti¹ nor by any male deity. So the task was given to Kālī, who successfully accomplished it, and so won a place among village deities.

At Cuddalore I visited a shrine of the goddess Mināchiāmmā at the village of Devanampattinam. It stands on the seashore on a low ridge of sand. There is no building, but an oblong space about 20 by 12 feet is enclosed on three sides by rows of clay figures, the eastern end towards the sea being left open. On the western side of the oblong, facing the sea, there were

¹ This word is used for an image with three heads, representing Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva in a triple manifestation of the divine nature.

two small clay figures, apparently a man and a woman, seated in the centre. They were about a foot high with the remnants of old garlands on them. To the left and right of them were figures of seven virgins (or *Baptismandin* gaut) very well modelled in clay and about nine inches high. In front of them and beside them were the figures of male guardians and attendants. (On each side of the images of the virgins was a figure of a large round fish, with open mouth and staring eyes, and seated on the back of each fish were the figures of a man and a woman. The priest of the shrine told me that the woman was *Mink-hi* the fish-goddess and the man *Maturni Vira*n. Beside each fish were figures of guardians and attendants. The north and south sides of the oblong which are about twenty-one feet in length are formed by clay figures of horses and elephants, some of them with men on their backs. The elephants are quaint creatures, very like horses with trunks. The horses are not in this case steeds of the god *Iyennar* but simply the attendants of *Mink-hi* and the seven virgins. Animal sacrifices consisting of goats, cocks, etc., are offered to these deities once a year at an annual festival. The priest at the shrine gave the name of the fish as something like *u* *u* *u* but the translator of the district and sessions court of South Arcot told me that the fish on which *Mink-hi* and *Maturni Vira*n are seated is the *u* *u* *u* fish, which is a sea fish that runs up the river in flood times when the bar is open, and generally travels a considerable distance till it meets with an anicut or some similar obstacle. It gets very fat and is a favourite dish. The goddess *Mink-hi* who is seated on it is commonly worshipped by fishermen, who swear by her name. She is the goddess worshipped in the great temple of *Madura* together with the god *Siva*. *Maturni Vira*n is a male attendant of nearly all the village goddesses throughout the Tamil country, and he is generally represented by a small conical stone or the image of a man carved in bas-relief on a stone slab, standing outside the shrine.

The Saptakannigas (the seven virgins), or Akasakannigas (the heavenly virgins) are the tutelary deities of tanks and the figures of the Kannigas seated in a row are often carved on a small stone and placed on tall boulders especially at places where the tank has been breached. In the North Arcot district they are described as female creatures who are very quarrelsome and when they fight trees are caused to be felled by the stamping of their feet. At the same time they are supposed to protect tanks, and when the flood rises to a dangerous point, it is said that one of the Kannigas in the shape of a little child runs through the village knocking at the doors and calling up the villagers to come and protect the bund. It is believed that people working alone along a tank bund have sometimes met the Saptakannigas going in procession with horses and oxen; and that any one who sees them invariably dies. The district judge told me that in a case which came before him in the North Arcot district, a man who was killed by a fracture of his skull because a woman of his had hit him on the head with a thick sugar cane was reported to have died as the result of meeting a procession of the Saptakannigas on the tank bund, and that the village magistrate excused himself for not reporting the man's death, because he considered it to be a death by natural causes.

A more deity called Khandavar is worshipped in many parts of the Tamil country especially in the South Arcot district. At the village of Devanampetnam near Chingleput I saw an image of this god in a small shrine built of brick with a rough pandanus of bamboo thatched with coconut leaves in front of it. The image consisted of a head like a big mask about three feet high with a robust face, strong features, mustaches turning up at the end, lion's teeth projecting downwards outside the mouth from the angles of the upper jaw and a tall conical head dress called in Tamil *Arattam*. Below this stone there was a small stone head about one and a half feet high which was a miniature of the larger figure. It was finely chiseled and

the people told me that it was the work of the stone masons who made the new images of Ishta, ^{or} its temple. Both images had the marks of a shrine, & their feet were so close that the ^{feet} of the shrine. The people said that the images represented the god Kuttavayer, and he told me the following legend about them. The girl Indra for the crime of murdering a Brahman became incarnated in the form of Kuttavayer and a curse was laid upon him that his body should rot away leaving only the head, with the result that no one would give him his daughter in marriage, because if they were married in the morning his body would rot away before the evening and so he would become a widow and the ^{tail} be cut. Sri Krishna however took pity on him assumed the female form of Mohini and consented to be married to him in the morning and then as he vanished at ^{the} the head the ^{tail} was cut in the evening. In memory of this event, during the festival, which is celebrated in the month of Chitra (April) a crowd of men dressed as women come to the shrine with ^{tails} on their necks. In the evening at sunset the ^{tail} is cut because the god has died and all the people dressed as women have become widows. The festival, therefore, is necessarily limited to the late time. Girls and girls are sacrificed to the god a little distance in front of the shrine. The festival is attended by all non-Brahman castes. The people who showed me the shrine said that Kuttavayer is so named from an Asura or Demon or Kutta, whom the god killed. But as Kuttavayer is especially the god of the actors or dancers, or *Attidadi*, who are very numerous in South Arcot and are a sub-division of the Padayachi caste it seems likely that the name is derived from *Attidadi* (a dancer or actor). I was told that wherever the Vaisnavas or Padayachis are in great numbers for instance, in the South Arcot, Umbalare and Salem districts, and in the city of Madras, one is sure to see a large number of shrines of the god Kuttavayer. The worship of this god is, however, not considered to be very respectable. There is apparently no immorality con-

connected with his worship, but more respectable members of the caste do not use such dressing like women. The members of the Padamachari caste therefore who have been educated in recent years and have risen in the social scale tend to give up the worship of Kuttandavar.

I have often seen on the seashore of Madras a conical heap of sand about three inches high, standing on a small platform of sand with camphor and noose in a small earthenware vessel, or in a heap of old netting. The conical heap of sand represents the goddess Kammamma, the grama-devatā of the fishing village. The fishermen have told me that she is the goddess who gives them fish and enables them to make a living and that they make these offerings to her when fish are scarce and they have reason to think that she is angry. This illustrates the characteristic feature of an animistic worship. Its chief if not only motive is to propitiate the angry deity. Probably some hint of the same feeling lurks beneath the custom of Roman Catholic fishermen when they bring holy water from the church and sprinkle it on their nets after they have fished all the day and caught nothing. Probably the object of this custom is to exorcise a malignant spirit from the gale.

In the Mysore country I came across quite a different set of names for the village goddesses. At one village, near Mangalore, the name of the goddess was Mahadevaramma (great goddess) also called Savaramma (she who rules on horseback). Her sister Lakshamma, and her brother Minnavara, share in the worship paid to her. At another village a goddess, called Pūamma (she who is worshipped) was shown to me. She was said to be the local goddess of the Madiga, the lowest section of the Out-castes in the Telugu country, but at the same time the Śūtras make vows to her to induce her to ward off diseases from their homes, and then fulfil their vows by sacrificing buffaloes or throwing

* See note on p. 10 above.

silver pins through their cheeks. Annamma is the principal goddess at another shrine in Bangalore City, and in the same shrine are six other deities, Chandesvaramma, Mayelvaramma, Maramma (the children goddess), U'samma (she of the swollen neck), Kukkalamma (the goddess of coughs), Sukkajamma (the goddess of rotasies and small pox).

At some villages a little distance from Bangalore the deity was simply the grāma-devatā, the village goddess. In Mysore City the grāma-devatā is known as Bissu, Mariamma (Bissu in Canarese means sunlight, and I was told that *Mari* means *śakti*¹ or power). The deity seems to have been originally connected with sun-worship. I was told that her shrines are never covered with a roof and one of the symbols representing the deity is a brass pot full of water with a small mirror leaning against it, called *Kunna-Kannadu*, i.e. eye mirror.

There are seven Mari deities, all sisters who are worshipped in Mysore. All the seven sisters are regarded vaguely as wives or sisters of Śiva.

In Mysore villages Mahadeva-Amma, the great goddess and Hiliamma, the tiger goddess, are found and doubtless there are countless other names in the Mysore State for the many deities who are worshipped as the guardians of the villages and the averters of epidemics and other misfortunes.

It is quite probable that originally in South India the village goddesses had all quite simple names, such as U'ramma or Grāma-devatā, both meaning village goddess or Pēdamma, great mother, and that the imagination of the villagers gradually invented special titles for their own guardian deities. But at the present time the village deities consist of a most miscellaneous collection of spirits, good, bad, and indifferent, who

¹ The chief Hindu gods are held to be actionless but withdrawn from the bustle of the universe. In each case however the god's energy manifests itself in his wife who is called his *śakti*. To the Hindus who worship Kālī, the wife of Śiva, are called *śaktas*. For *Mari* see also p. 32.

baffle all attempt at classification, enumeration, or explanation. A few of them, like Mariamma and Iyenar, have won their way to general respect or fear among the Tamil people, and where Brāhman influence is strong there has been an obvious attempt, as we have seen to connect the village goddesses with the popular worship of Śiva or Viṣṇu, but it is more than doubtful whether originally they had anything to do with either Śaivism or Vāishnavism. The stories told about them in the folklore of the people which represent them as *avātāra* or incarnations of Śiva, were probably quite late inventions, to account for names and ceremonies whose meaning had long been lost.

(b) The characters of the goddesses vary considerably. The villagers do not regard them as evil spirits, but neither do they regard them as unmixed benefactors. They are rather mixed up as beings of uncertain temper, very human in their liability to take offence. At Coimbatore the priest is told me that the village goddess who is significantly called Nukalamma from a colloquial Tamil word meaning 'to beat' causes all sorts of trouble and is dreaded as an evil spirit. But when an epidemic of cholera breaks out they curiously enough install another goddess, called Mariamma, in her place, and offer sacrifices to her instead of to Nukalamma, a proceeding calculated, one would have thought, to give dire offence.

Mahākālī or great Kali is another form or *avātāra* of the same goddess. She is supposed to be a deity of furious temper, and to be the cause of the prevalence of cholera. She is also known as *Vira Mahākālī* or *Ugra Mahākālī*¹ to denote her rage and fury.

Another deity of similarly violent temper is Angamma, who is worshipped largely in the Coimbatore district. The plea seems to be that all who worship the *Aṣṭa Śakti*, or eight powers of the

¹ *Vira* is a Sanskrit word meaning heroic.

² *Ugra* is a Sanskrit word meaning fierce.

universe will attain to bliss while the others will be destroyed by Angaamma. The people worship her to avoid falling victims to her unquenchable anger since her main object is believed to be to devour and consume everything that comes in her way. She is said especially to have a great relish for bones.

Another deity of a very different disposition is Kāṇḍāmma, whose name implies that she is full of good and gracious qualities. She is reported to have been born a Brahman girl and then to have become the avatar of one of the Ashta Śakti.

Another benevolent deity is Thorupathamma, who is reported to have been the wife of a Rishi and a very virtuous woman. In her next birth she was allowed to be born a king's daughter. Accordingly when Thorupatham King of Panhara offered a *paṭravḍagam* (poṭṭavaga is a sacrifice to obtain a child) she came forth from the fire. She afterwards became the wife of the Pandavas, the five brothers famous in the great Hindu epic the *Mahābhārata*, and is regarded as one of the Ashta Śakti.

(c) The functions of the different goddesses are not at all clearly marked in the Telugu country. The people often told me. They are only different names for the same goddess. In some places there is a special chāra goddess e.g. Ankamma and in others a special small pot goddess e.g. Gaṅgamma but as a rule the infliction and removal of epidemics and disasters is a general function of all goddesses alike. On the other hand in the Coimbatore Tanjore and Trichinopoly districts of the Tamil country where the people have been for many generations past far more influenced by civilization and Brahmanism than in the Telugu country I found that the functions of different deities were far more differentiated and that often elaborate stories were current as to their origin and characters. For example, one of the deities worshipped in almost

* Sanskrit: Kāṇḍāmbi, "the love-eyed one," an epithet of Kālī, the wife of Śiva.

every village in the Tamil country is Mariamma or Mari, the goddess of smallpox.

It is generally said that Mariamma is not found in any temples dedicated to one of the seven sisters, as she is considered superior to them in power and much worse in temper. The seven sisters are supposed to be kind and indulgent, while Mariamma is vindictive and inexorable and without to propitiate. The boundary goddess is worshipped in the Tanjore district under the name of Kāl, and her special function is to prevent any evil coming from without into the village of which she is the guardian, while the seven sisters are supposed to guard against any evil arising within the village itself. Though Mariamma keeps herself apart from the seven sisters, I came across in the South Arcot district a shrine dedicated to Mariamma who was said to be another form of Mariamma and to preside over smallpox in which were seven images of seven brothers. The youngest, called Man, (ghost) was the tallest and was represented by a larger clay figure seated on a raised platform, with his six smaller brothers standing beside him.

In the Tamil districts of Tanjore, Tiruchinopoly and Cuddalore the names of village deities most commonly met with are Palāṇi, which is often used as a generic name of village deities, Mariamma, Kāl, Senamma, Draupadi, and Angamma. Mariamma is the commonest of them all, and her function is always to infect or ward off smallpox. Palāṇi is supposed to act as guardian against evil spirits and epidemics, especially cholera. Kāl is often regarded as especially the protectress against evil spirits that haunt forests and fertile places and against wild beasts. In some parts she is the special goddess of the bird-catchers. But in some villages she is also the guardian against cholera. Except however in the villages near Tanjore, I have not met with Kāl in the capacity of a boundary goddess. In other places there are curious ceremonies

* This is for Draupadi, the heroine of the Mahabharata.

connected with the boundary stone *ellakal* as it is called, and I was told in one village that in the boundary stone reside evil spirits which it is the object of the ceremonies to propitiate. In another village I found that there was a festival to a goddess called *Ellar-Pidāri*.¹

(d) *Male deities*. Next to Mariamma, the deity that is most universally worshipped among the Tamils is *Iyēnar* and, as already stated, he is the only village deity largely worshipped in the Tamil country who seems to be an exception to the general rule that the village deities are female. In almost every Tamil village there is a shrine of *Iyēnar* who is regarded as the watchman of the village and is supposed to patrol it every night mounted on a ghostly steed, a terror to *peṇṇi* scaring away the evil spirits. He has always a separate shrine and is not like *Mumadian* and *Madurai Viran*² simply an attendant of a local goddess. His shrine may be known by the clay or concrete figures of horses ranged on either side of the image or piled about in the compound of the shrine in admired confusion. The horses are offered by devotees and represent the steeds on which he rides in his nightly rounds. He is regarded by the villagers as a good and benevolent protector of far higher character than the disreputable *Madurai Viran*.

Another male deity of much inferior character to *Iyēnar*, who is sometimes worshipped separately as *Karuppanna*. As a rule he is simply one of the subordinate male attendants of the village goddesses but in some places I have met with separate shrines to *Karuppanna*, where he presides as the chief deity. At one of these shrines worship was offered exclusively by *Paraiyars*.³ At another place the evil spirit residing in the boundary stone was called *Ellar-Karuppa*.

In one village in the Trichinopoly district, I came

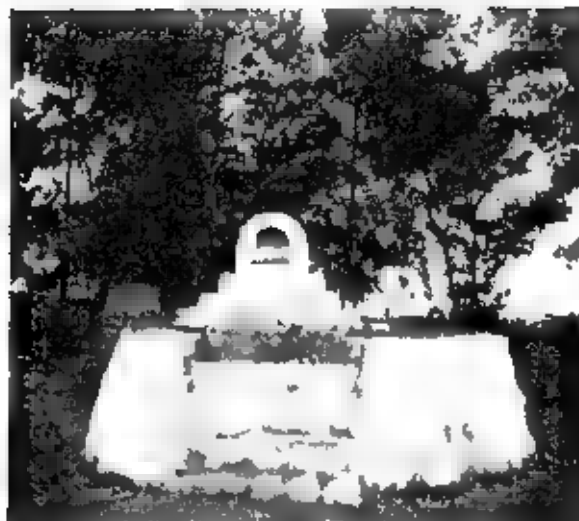
¹ See below and cf. p. 101.

² *Viran* is the Tamil form of *Vīra* here.

³ The chief group of *Paraiyars* in the Tamil country.

across a male deity known as Rāja Vayan (King Father), who was represented by four or five stakes, about five or six feet high, with iron spear-heads on top. The spears were stuck on one side of a stone platform under a tamarind and an areca tree, and reminded me of the wooden stakes representing Potu-Razu in the Telugu country. In one shrine belonging exclusively to the Pariahs of a village, I found that the chief deities were all male and not female. Whether these independent and semi-independent male deities have in all cases developed out of the subordinate male attendants of the village deities, or whether they belong to another Dravidian cult, it is difficult to say.

PLATE I



TYPICAL SHRINE OF GRĀMA-DEVATĀ

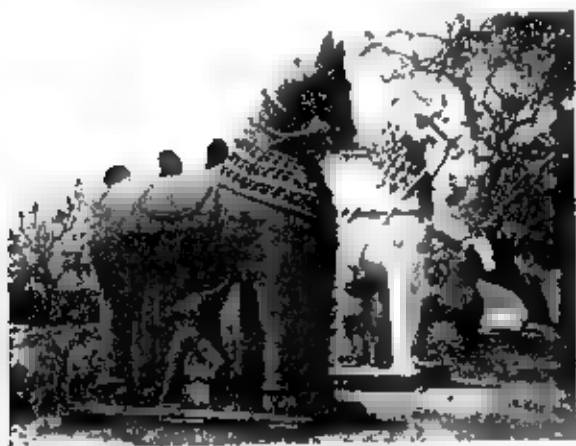


INTERIOR OF SHRINE WITH STONES AS SYMBOLS

PLATE II



TYPICAL SHRINE OF GRĂMIA PLATĂ



CLAY HORSES OF IVHNAR

CHAPTER II

THE CULT

SHRINES, SYMBOLS, MINISTRANTS, FESTIVALS

Sārāra. The shrines of the village deities, destitute of uniformity or comeliness, are characteristic of this whole system of religion. They represent the dwelling places of petty local deities concerned with the affairs of a petty local community. They express the meanness of a religion of fear. There is nothing about them to suggest feelings of adoration or love. Some of the shrines, especially in the Tamil country, are fairly large buildings, ornamented with grotesque figures, almost rivaling in size and architectural features the local temples of Śiva and Viṣṇu. The shrines of *Iṇmar* are distinguished by figures of horses great and small, on which he is supposed to ride round the village every night to chase away the evil spirits. But the majority of the shrines are mean little brick buildings of various shapes and sizes, often no more than four or five feet high, with a rough figure of the deity inside, carved in bas-relief on a small stone. In many villages the shrine is merely a rough stone platform under a tree, with sticks or iron spears stuck on it to represent the deity. Often a large rough stone with no carving on it is stuck up in a field or under a tree, and serves for shrine and image alike. The boundary stone of the village lands is very commonly regarded as a habitation of a local deity and might be called a shrine or symbol with equal propriety.¹ In many villages of

¹ See above, p. 22.

the Telugu country there is no permanent shrine at all, but a temporary one is put up made of bamboo and cloth to accommodate the deity whenever a festival is held. It seems probable that this 'tent of meeting' represents the primitive use, and that the permanent shrine was a later development, when individual worshippers began to make offerings in times of domestic trouble and when the village community as a whole realized more fully the need of help and protection in the ordinary affairs of daily life.

Symbols. The images or symbols, by which the village deities are represented, are almost as diverse as their names. In some of the more primitive villages there is no permanent image or symbol of the deity at all, but a clay figure of the goddess is made by the potter or the gollari¹ for each festival, and then cast away beyond the boundaries of the village when the festival is ended. In other villages the deity is represented simply by a stone pillar standing in a field, or on a stone platform under a tree, or in a small enclosure surrounded by a stone wall. Often the stones, which represent the different deities, are simply small conical stones not more than five or six inches high, blackened with the anointing oil. It is difficult to see anything at all peculiar in them which in any way fits them to be symbols of the goddesses or their male attendants. In more civilized parts a slab of stone has the figure of a woman roughly carved upon it, sometimes with four, six, or eight arms, holding various implements in her hands, sometimes with only two arms, and sometimes with none at all.

Here is the description of a typical image which I saw in the Tirunelveli district. It was a stone figure of a woman about two and a half feet high, with eight arms, and in her hands a knife, a shield, a bull, a devil's head, a drum, a three pronged fork, a goat, and a piece of rope. Truly a collection of articles worthy of a schoolboy's pocket! Another image of the goddess

¹ Most of these objects appear in the hands of images of Ganesha or of his wife Kālī.

made of the five metals (gold, silver, brass, copper, and iron) was kept at night in the temple of Siva at the temple of Siva. It is very common in the Tantric districts to find a stone image kept in the shrine and a small portable metal image which is used in processions during the festival.

Very often the goddess is represented in processions by a brass pot filled with water and decorated with mango-leaf leaves. I saw one of these brass pots in a shrine of Kumbhara at Nava in the Tantric district. It was about a foot high and a foot in diameter at the base and had four holes sticking out from the sides. In the Tantric villages where the image is fixed in the shrine and there is no metal image in use in processions, an earthenware pot is used, lined with water and decorated with mango-leaf leaves.

At Lingaur in the Tantric district I found a small earthenware pot filled with water and decorated with mango-leaf leaves. The pot is filled with water and has a small earthenware pot (the pot) placed in the mouth of the pot. The pot is decorated with a bunch of mango leaves tied together by tender shoots of the banana tree. This bunch of mango leaves is then decorated with flowers. A small pointed stick of bamboo with a line stuck on the end is inserted at the top of the pot and by the side of the line a small earthenware number with a silver handle. The decoration is very simple. The decorated pot is placed on a small platform of mud and about eight measures of rice are heaped round the base of it. It is placed before the pot and is usually prepared at the chief shrine of Kumbhara.

* This practice is borrowed from Hindu temples.

* The mango-leaf leaves are an earthenware bearing which carries the goddess and is frequently decorated with village divisions.

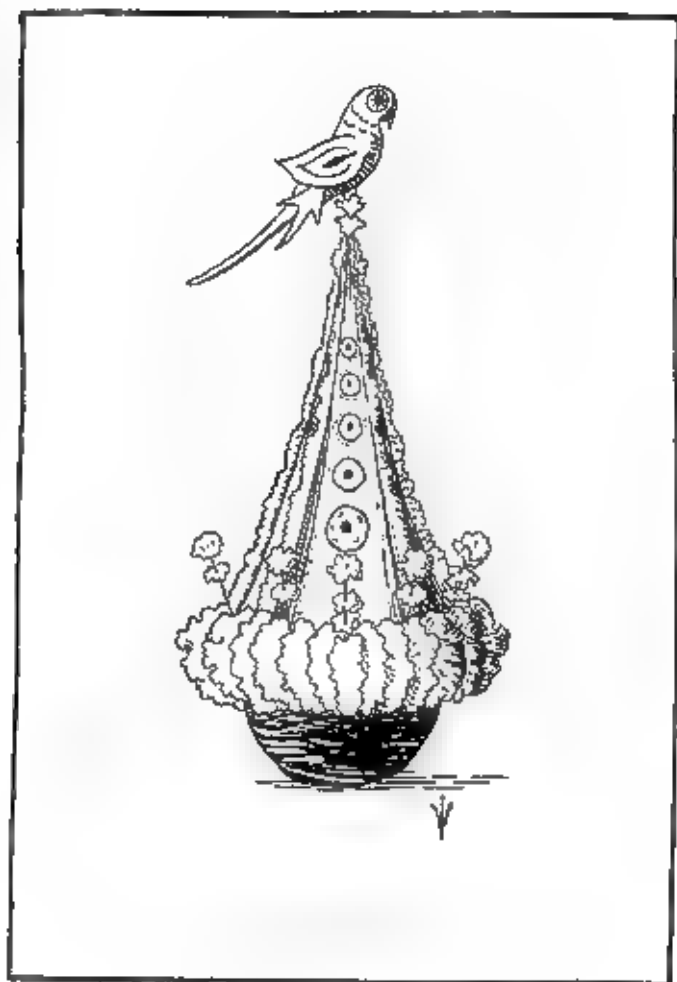
about a mile outside the village and during the festival is treated exactly like the goddess. It is taken round in procession in the head of a palanquin to the sound of two drums and gongs. Offerings of fruit and flowers are made to it at several points along the way and it is well-chipped with the striking of pots and pans.

The use made of the baragan is also worth notice. The following is from an article by Mr. F. J. Richards, I.C.S. :—

The *baragan* goddess is popularly believed to be the mother of the washerman. He is therefore chosen to officiate as the priest, as the god alone can hope to succour in any distress such a fierce deity.

A *baragan* is prepared and the village washerman bathes early in the morning and places it on his head. Then, having a *baragan* on his head and margins *baragan* in the other, he goes through the village dancing. Before the *baragan* procession three ponds in the village are put large quantities of aggrar into the big iron buckets and let in the water. When two or three of such buckets are full the priest pours out the water and the washerman dances at the point where the fuel is distributed. After lunch when the procession passes through the village sheep are sacrificed at the important centres in the village and the blood collected in a steel vessel. The washerman with the *baragan* on his head goes on dancing through the house of the village priest and by the village musicians. At the point where the village baragan is the offering village he places the *baragan* and the blood which had been collected at the different places of sacrifice and returns home after taking a bath in his way. The goddess is believed to be propitiated by this, and any further attacks of disease are attributed to the perfunctory discharge of this duty by the washerman. The sacrifices victims are sheep only and the method of sacrifice is decapitation. The duty is thus propitiated and

* A *baragan* is a narrow drum. It is usually shaped like a small barrel and tapers at both ends with the handle and bagging.



KARAGAM

PLATE IV



PŪJĀRĪ WITH ARATĪ



STONE SYMBOL OF POTU-RĀZJ WITH STAKE FOR
IMPALING ANIMALS

roughly represented on one side of it by pieces of silver and blotches of kunkuma.¹ red paste stuck on to represent the eyes, nose, mouth, etc. Sticks of incense were stuck in the lamp all round and on the top were about four betel leaves stuck upright and forming a sort of cup with a wreath of white flowers below them. An *Iratti* was brought to me at Mysore by the *pūjāris* for my inspection. It was a queer object and seemed like the relic of some harvest festival of bygone days.

A common symbol of the village deities is simply a stick or a spear. It is very common in the Tamil country to see one or more iron spears stuck in the ground under a tree to represent some village deity. The idea seems to be that the deity is represented by his weapons. In the Telugu country *Potu-Rasu*, the brother or husband of the village goddess is sometimes represented by a stone, sometimes by a thin wooden stake like an attenuated post about four or five feet high and roughly carved at the top. It faintly resembles a spear and is called *śālam* which in Telugu means a spear.² Sometimes this stake stands beside a slab of stone representing *Potu-Rasu*. At one village the symbol of *Potu-Rasu* is a painted image made of wood, about three feet high representing a warrior sitting down with a sword in his hand, and carrying a 'tine and nose' glass bangles belonging to his sister *Emma*. Beside each foot is the figure of a cock and in the shrine is kept a large painted mask for the *pūjāri* to wear at festivals, as he dances round the image of *Potu-Rasu*. But elaborate images of *Potu-Rasu* of this kind are not very often found.

Another symbol akin to these stakes and spears is the *Nattai Kal* in the Tamil country. *Nattai* means "painted" and *Kal* means a stone or "post". The *Nattai Kal* is the first post of a nuptial booth, set up at an auspicious moment, painted red and white, adorned

¹ See p. 39.

² *Śāla's* spear is called *śāl* in Sanskrit, and his trident is *śālikā*, three-spined.

with various decorations, and worshipped with offerings of coconuts and flowers. The symbolism is obscure.

The name is also applied to a small stone set up at the entrance to a village which, according to a writer in the *Indian Interpreter* who reviewed the first edition of this book in the January number 1917, is said to represent all the other Nais which are composed in the particular district to which that place belongs, and is worshipped on the occasion of a marriage. The reviewer thinks that it is evident that it points back to a time when people were not so numerous or so widely separated and when all could come to the marriage festivities, and that when that time passed some means had to be found for the representation of the others. For this purpose a stone was erected to symbolise the clan and worship offered to it. It is probable, however, that the stone placed at the entrance of Tamil villages is akin to the *Adze* stone or *navel* stone set up at the foundation of a village in the Telegu country, as described below on page 74, which probably represents, like the *family* stone, the spirit of the land on which the village is built.

The Naitan has set up for the wedding birth moor, in the same way represent the spirit who presides over the practical conduct of life and may possibly be a *ghost* or *spirit* like the *ghost* of *Siva*.

Why stones or posts should in this way represent spirits it is difficult to explain. I have given below on page 148 what seems to me a possible explanation. But it must be admitted that all explanations can only be regarded as more or less probable hypotheses.

The shrines and images of King Jina village in the Mysore country not far from Bangalore are typical of that part of the country. At the extreme entrance to the village near a tank stands a small shrine of stone and mud sacred to the goddess *Parvati* (she who is worshipped). On the stone door-posts are carved figures of serpents. Within the shrine there is no image of any kind, but on the left-hand side of the door is a platform, covered with garlands of white flowers,

with a small earthenware lamp upon it, which is kept burning day and night as a symbol of the goddess.

To the right of this shrine stands a smaller one dedicated to a goddess called Dalamma. No one in the village could tell me who the goddess was nor what her name meant. There was no image nor lamp nor symbol of any kind in her shrine. An old picture frame, hung up on the wall to the left, without any picture in it, was the only attempt at decoration or symbolism. Just within the doorway was a shallow trough about one and a half feet long, one foot broad, and two inches deep, where the worshippers break their cocoanuts.

In front of the larger shrine stood an enclosure about five or six yards square, enclosed by a stone wall, with four slabs of stone in the centre on which a platform is erected, covered by a canopy of cloth and leaves, during the annual festival. The lighted lamp is then brought out from the shrine, placed under the canopy, and worshipped as the symbol of the goddess. Apparently cattle are tethered in the enclosure at other times, and, when I saw it, there were no obvious marks of sanctity about it. About twenty yards off stands the Cattle Stone, a slab of rough stone about five feet high and three feet broad, set upon a stone platform about one and a half feet high. When the cattle get sore feet, their owners pour curds over the Cattle Stone for their recovery.

Near the Cattle Stone, in a field on the outskirts of the houses, stands a square stone pillar, about five feet high and half a foot in thickness, without any carving or ornament on it whatever. It represents Maramma, the goddess of small pox and other epidemics, a most malignant spirit. Apparently she had been brought to this village by some people who had migrated from another village called Hethana; whence she is called Maramma-Hethana. Buffaloes and sheep are offered to her whenever epidemics break out.

The grāma-devatā herself—she has no other name—has in this village no permanent image. The gold-

smith makes an image of clay in the form of a woman, about one or one and a half feet high. every year at the annual festival, which takes place after harvest, and she is then placed in the centre of the village under a canopy of green boughs. One striking feature of this festival is that on the first day of the festival a woman comes from every household to the place of worship with a lighted lamp made of rice flour, called *Arati*, and they all together wave their lamps in a circle from left to right above their heads and from right to left below.¹ When the festival is over, the washerman of the village, who acts as *pūjārī*, accompanied by all the villagers, takes the image to the tank, walks into the water and leaves it there. In some villages in the Mysore State the *Arati* is presented by the men the heads of the households, and not by the women. But in all the annual festivals in these parts the presentation of the *Arati*, which seems often to be regarded as a symbol of the deity herself, forms an important part of the ceremonial.

Ministrants. One of the most striking features of the worship of the village deities is the absence of anything like a sacerdotal caste in connexion with it. Every other department of village work belongs to a special caste, and in the ordinary worship of Visnou and Śiva the priestly caste of the Brāhman is supreme. But in the worship of the village deities the *pūjārīs* are drawn from all the lower castes indiscriminately, though in any one village the *pūjārīs* of a particular goddess nearly always belong to one particular caste.

I have occasionally found a Brāhman in charge of a *grāma devatā* shrine in the Tamil country. But then, as I have noted above, the Brāhman *pūjārī* never takes any part in the animal sacrifices, and, even so, is degraded by his connexion with the shrine. In the Telugu country the potters and the washermen, who are Śūdras of low caste, often officiate as priests and

¹ See p. 39, n. 4.

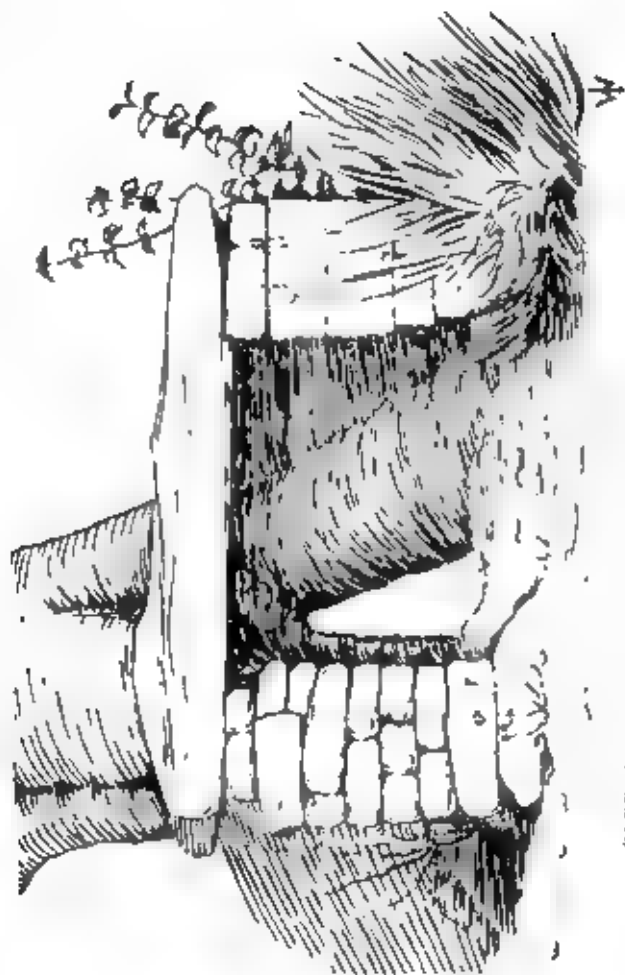
an important part especially in the buffalo sacrifices, is taken by the *Mālas* and *Māṭigas*.¹

A *Māṭiga* nearly always kills the buffalo and performs the unpleasant ceremonies connected with the sprinkling of the blood, and there are certain families among the *Mālas* called *Aśṭas* who are the nearest approach to a priestly caste in connexion with the village deities. They have the hereditary right to assist at the sacrifices to chant the praises of the goddess while the sacrifices are being offered, and to perform certain ceremonies. But in the more primitive villages, where, it may be presumed, primitive customs prevail it is remarkable how great a variety of people take an official part in the worship: the potter, the carpenter, the toddy-drawer, the washerman, *Mālas* and *Māṭigas*, and even the *Brāhman Aśvame* or village accountant, have all their parts to play.

In the Tamil country this is not so marked, and the details of the worship are left far more to the regular *priest*. It is not unlike that the office of *priest* is by no means as burdensome now and this is especially the case among the Tamils, where *Brāhman* influence is strong and the shedding of blood is regarded with aversion. And even among the *Brāhman*s themselves, though they owe their influence to the fact that they are the priestly caste, the men who serve the temples are regarded as having a lower position in the caste than those *Brāhman*s engaged in secular pursuits.

Among the *Canarese* in the *Bellary* district the *Aśṭas* take a similar part in the worship to the *Aśṭas* in the *Telugu* country. In the whole of the *Bellary* district there are about sixty families of them living in three separate villages. They form practically a separate caste or section of the *Outcastes*. They eat food given them by the *Māṭigas* and take their girls in marriage. The *Aśṭas* girls, however, never marry, but

¹ The *Mālas* and *Māṭigas* are the chief groups of *Outcastes* in the *Telugu* country.



WIDE CHIN AT FOOT OF TREE WITH BARE STONE AN SACHU



RUDE S. IR. N.



MİNÄCHİ AND THE SEVEN SISTERS, CUDDALORE

we make bounds ϵ or δ are assigned to the problem. An initial point x_0 is chosen. In the first step, a region R_1 is chosen at x_0 and ϵ is chosen. In the second step, a region R_2 is chosen at x_1 and δ is chosen. In the third step, a region R_3 is chosen at x_2 and ϵ is chosen. In the fourth step, a region R_4 is chosen at x_3 and δ is chosen. In the fifth step, a region R_5 is chosen at x_4 and ϵ is chosen. In the sixth step, a region R_6 is chosen at x_5 and δ is chosen. In the seventh step, a region R_7 is chosen at x_6 and ϵ is chosen. In the eighth step, a region R_8 is chosen at x_7 and δ is chosen. In the ninth step, a region R_9 is chosen at x_8 and ϵ is chosen. In the tenth step, a region R_{10} is chosen at x_9 and δ is chosen. In the eleventh step, a region R_{11} is chosen at x_{10} and ϵ is chosen. In the twelfth step, a region R_{12} is chosen at x_{11} and δ is chosen. In the thirteenth step, a region R_{13} is chosen at x_{12} and ϵ is chosen. In the fourteenth step, a region R_{14} is chosen at x_{13} and δ is chosen. In the fifteenth step, a region R_{15} is chosen at x_{14} and ϵ is chosen. In the sixteenth step, a region R_{16} is chosen at x_{15} and δ is chosen. In the seventeenth step, a region R_{17} is chosen at x_{16} and ϵ is chosen. In the eighteenth step, a region R_{18} is chosen at x_{17} and δ is chosen. In the nineteenth step, a region R_{19} is chosen at x_{18} and ϵ is chosen. In the twentieth step, a region R_{20} is chosen at x_{19} and δ is chosen. In the twenty-first step, a region R_{21} is chosen at x_{20} and ϵ is chosen. In the twenty-second step, a region R_{22} is chosen at x_{21} and δ is chosen. In the twenty-third step, a region R_{23} is chosen at x_{22} and ϵ is chosen. In the twenty-fourth step, a region R_{24} is chosen at x_{23} and δ is chosen. In the twenty-fifth step, a region R_{25} is chosen at x_{24} and ϵ is chosen. In the twenty-sixth step, a region R_{26} is chosen at x_{25} and δ is chosen. In the twenty-seventh step, a region R_{27} is chosen at x_{26} and ϵ is chosen. In the twenty-eighth step, a region R_{28} is chosen at x_{27} and δ is chosen. In the twenty-ninth step, a region R_{29} is chosen at x_{28} and ϵ is chosen. In the thirtieth step, a region R_{30} is chosen at x_{29} and δ is chosen. In the thirty-first step, a region R_{31} is chosen at x_{30} and ϵ is chosen. In the thirty-second step, a region R_{32} is chosen at x_{31} and δ is chosen. In the thirty-third step, a region R_{33} is chosen at x_{32} and ϵ is chosen. In the thirty-fourth step, a region R_{34} is chosen at x_{33} and δ is chosen. In the thirty-fifth step, a region R_{35} is chosen at x_{34} and ϵ is chosen. In the thirty-sixth step, a region R_{36} is chosen at x_{35} and δ is chosen. In the thirty-seventh step, a region R_{37} is chosen at x_{36} and ϵ is chosen. In the thirty-eighth step, a region R_{38} is chosen at x_{37} and δ is chosen. In the thirty-ninth step, a region R_{39} is chosen at x_{38} and ϵ is chosen. In the fortieth step, a region R_{40} is chosen at x_{39} and δ is chosen. In the forty-first step, a region R_{41} is chosen at x_{40} and ϵ is chosen. In the forty-second step, a region R_{42} is chosen at x_{41} and δ is chosen. In the forty-third step, a region R_{43} is chosen at x_{42} and ϵ is chosen. In the forty-fourth step, a region R_{44} is chosen at x_{43} and δ is chosen. In the forty-fifth step, a region R_{45} is chosen at x_{44} and ϵ is chosen. In the forty-sixth step, a region R_{46} is chosen at x_{45} and δ is chosen. In the forty-seventh step, a region R_{47} is chosen at x_{46} and ϵ is chosen. In the forty-eighth step, a region R_{48} is chosen at x_{47} and δ is chosen. In the forty-ninth step, a region R_{49} is chosen at x_{48} and ϵ is chosen. In the fiftieth step, a region R_{50} is chosen at x_{49} and δ is chosen. In the fifty-first step, a region R_{51} is chosen at x_{50} and ϵ is chosen. In the fifty-second step, a region R_{52} is chosen at x_{51} and δ is chosen. In the fifty-third step, a region R_{53} is chosen at x_{52} and ϵ is chosen. In the fifty-fourth step, a region R_{54} is chosen at x_{53} and δ is chosen. In the fifty-fifth step, a region R_{55} is chosen at x_{54} and ϵ is chosen. In the fifty-sixth step, a region R_{56} is chosen at x_{55} and δ is chosen. In the fifty-seventh step, a region R_{57} is chosen at x_{56} and ϵ is chosen. In the fifty-eighth step, a region R_{58} is chosen at x_{57} and δ is chosen. In the fifty-ninth step, a region R_{59} is chosen at x_{58} and ϵ is chosen. In the sixtieth step, a region R_{60} is chosen at x_{59} and δ is chosen. In the sixty-first step, a region R_{61} is chosen at x_{60} and ϵ is chosen. In the sixty-second step, a region R_{62} is chosen at x_{61} and δ is chosen. In the sixty-third step, a region R_{63} is chosen at x_{62} and ϵ is chosen. In the sixty-fourth step, a region R_{64} is chosen at x_{63} and δ is chosen. In the sixty-fifth step, a region R_{65} is chosen at x_{64} and ϵ is chosen. In the sixty-sixth step, a region R_{66} is chosen at x_{65} and δ is chosen. In the sixty-seventh step, a region R_{67} is chosen at x_{66} and ϵ is chosen. In the sixty-eighth step, a region R_{68} is chosen at x_{67} and δ is chosen. In the sixty-ninth step, a region R_{69} is chosen at x_{68} and ϵ is chosen. In the seventieth step, a region R_{70} is chosen at x_{69} and δ is chosen. In the seventy-first step, a region R_{71} is chosen at x_{70} and ϵ is chosen. In the seventy-second step, a region R_{72} is chosen at x_{71} and δ is chosen. In the seventy-third step, a region R_{73} is chosen at x_{72} and ϵ is chosen. In the seventy-fourth step, a region R_{74} is chosen at x_{73} and δ is chosen. In the seventy-fifth step, a region R_{75} is chosen at x_{74} and ϵ is chosen. In the seventy-sixth step, a region R_{76} is chosen at x_{75} and δ is chosen. In the seventy-seventh step, a region R_{77} is chosen at x_{76} and ϵ is chosen. In the seventy-eighth step, a region R_{78} is chosen at x_{77} and δ is chosen. In the seventy-ninth step, a region R_{79} is chosen at x_{78} and ϵ is chosen. In the eightieth step, a region R_{80} is chosen at x_{79} and δ is chosen. In the eighty-first step, a region R_{81} is chosen at x_{80} and ϵ is chosen. In the eighty-second step, a region R_{82} is chosen at x_{81} and δ is chosen. In the eighty-third step, a region R_{83} is chosen at x_{82} and ϵ is chosen. In the eighty-fourth step, a region R_{84} is chosen at x_{83} and δ is chosen. In the eighty-fifth step, a region R_{85} is chosen at x_{84} and ϵ is chosen. In the eighty-sixth step, a region R_{86} is chosen at x_{85} and δ is chosen. In the eighty-seventh step, a region R_{87} is chosen at x_{86} and ϵ is chosen. In the eighty-eighth step, a region R_{88} is chosen at x_{87} and δ is chosen. In the eighty-ninth step, a region R_{89} is chosen at x_{88} and ϵ is chosen. In the ninetieth step, a region R_{90} is chosen at x_{89} and δ is chosen. In the ninety-first step, a region R_{91} is chosen at x_{90} and ϵ is chosen. In the ninety-second step, a region R_{92} is chosen at x_{91} and δ is chosen. In the ninety-third step, a region R_{93} is chosen at x_{92} and ϵ is chosen. In the ninety-fourth step, a region R_{94} is chosen at x_{93} and δ is chosen. In the ninety-fifth step, a region R_{95} is chosen at x_{94} and ϵ is chosen. In the ninety-sixth step, a region R_{96} is chosen at x_{95} and δ is chosen. In the ninety-seventh step, a region R_{97} is chosen at x_{96} and ϵ is chosen. In the ninety-eighth step, a region R_{98} is chosen at x_{97} and δ is chosen. In the ninety-ninth step, a region R_{99} is chosen at x_{98} and ϵ is chosen. In the hundredth step, a region R_{100} is chosen at x_{99} and δ is chosen. In the hundred-first step, a region R_{101} is chosen at x_{100}

[illegible]

See below, p. 125, n. 1.

and to avert epidemics and other calamities from the village and to ward off the attacks of evil spirits.

Every village in South India is believed by the people to be surrounded by evil spirits, who are always on the watch to inflict diseases and misfortunes of all kinds on the unhappy villagers. They lurk everywhere on the tops of palmyra-trees, in caves and rocks, in ravines and chasms. They fly about in the air, like birds of prey ready to pounce down upon any unprotected victim and the Indian villagers pass through life in constant dread of these invisible enemies. So the poor people turn for protection to the guardian deities of their village, whose function it is to ward off these evil spirits and protect the village from epidemics of cholera, small pox, or fever, from cattle disease, failure of crops, chaulmlessness, fires, and all the manifold ills that flesh is heir to in an Indian village.

The sole object, then, of the worship of these village deities is to propitiate them and to avert their wrath. There is no idea of praise and thanksgiving, no expression of gratitude or love, no desire for any spiritual or moral blessings. The one object is to get rid of cholera, small pox, cattle disease, or drought or to avert some of the minor evils of life. The worship, therefore, in most of the villages only takes place occasionally. Sometimes, as I have stated above, there are daily offerings made to the deity but, as a rule, the worship is confined to one big sacrifice which takes place once a year, or on the occasion of some special disaster or outbreak of disease. The general attitude of the villager towards his village deity is. Let sleeping dogs lie. So long as everything goes on well and there is no disease afflicting man or beast, and no drought nor other great calamity it seems safest to let her alone. But, when misfortune comes, it is a sign that she is out of temper, and it is time to take steps to appease her wrath.

I have dignified the periodical sacrifices to the village goddesses by the name of festivals. But the term is a misnomer. There is really nothing of a

festal character about them. They are only gloomy and weird rites for the propitiation of angry deities or the driving away of evil spirits, and it is very difficult to detect any traces of a spirit of thankfulness or praise. Even the term worship is hardly correct. The object of all the various rites and ceremonies is not to worship the deity in any true sense of the word, but simply to propitiate it and avert its wrath. A brief description of the sacrifices and offerings themselves will make this clear. But I must premise that, as with the names and images and shrines, so with the offerings and sacrifices, there is no law of uniformity: the variations of local use and custom are innumerable. Still, the accounts here given will give a fair idea of the general type of rites and ceremonies prevalent throughout South India, in the propitiation of village deities.

CHAPTER IV

MODES OF WORSHIP IN THE TELUGU COUNTRY

LET us suppose that an attack of cholera or small-pox has broken out in a village of South India. We will take a village in the Telugu country, in one of the more backward districts, where life is lived under more primitive conditions than in places where large towns and railways and the influence of the Brāhmins have tended to change old-fashioned ideas and customs.

A Telugu Village The village deity, in this particular village, is called Peddamma, the great mother. The epidemic is a sign that she is angry and requires to be propitiated. So a collection is made for the expenses of a festival, or a rich man offers to pay all expenses, and a propitious day is selected, which in this village may be any day except Sunday or Thursday. Then the potter of the village is instructed to make a clay image of the great mother, and the carpenter to make a small wooden cart, and a buffalo is chosen as the chief victim for the sacrifice.

When the appointed day arrives, the buffalo is sprinkled all over with yellow *turmeric*,¹ while garlands of margosa leaves are hung round its neck and tied to its horns. At about two p.m. it is conducted round the village in procession to the sound of music and the beating of tom-toms. The two sections of the Outcastes, the Mālas and the Mādīgās, take the leading

¹ *Curcuma longa* is an Indian plant from the rootstock of which a powder called turmeric is extracted. This powder is used as a dye and also as one of the ingredients of curry-powder.

part in the sacrifice and conduct the buffalo from house to house. One Maligā goes on ahead, with attention to announce that the buffalo devoted to the goddess is coming. The people then come out from their houses to go down to worship the buffalo and pour water over his feet, and also give some food to the Malas and Maligās, who form the procession. By about eight p.m. this ceremony is finished, and the buffalo is brought to an open spot in the village and tied up near a small canopy of cloth supported on bamboo poles, which has been set up for the reception of the goddess. All the villagers then assemble at the same place, and at about ten p.m. they go in procession with music and tom-toms and torches, to the house of the potter where the clay image is ready prepared. On arriving at his house they pour about two and a half measures of rice on the ground and put the image on the top of it, adorned with a new cloth and jewels. All who are present then worship the image, and a ram is killed, its head being cut off with a large chopper, and the blood sprinkled on the top of the image as a kind of consecration. The potter then takes up the idol and carries it out of the house for a little distance and gives it to a washerman, who carries it to the place where the canopy has been set up to receive it. During the procession the people flourish sticks and swords and spears to keep off the evil spirits, and, for the same purpose, cut limes in half and throw them up in the air. The idea is that the greedy demons will clutch at the golden limes and carry them off, and so be diverted from any attack on the man who carries the image. When the idol has been duly deposited under the canopy another procession is made to the house of the toddy-drawer. He is the man who climbs the palm trees and draws off the juice which is made into toddy. At his house some rice is cooked, and a pot of toddy and a bottle of *arack*¹ are produced and duly smeared with yellow turmeric and a red paste, constantly used in religious

¹ Arack is a native intoxicant.





away by the people and eaten in their homes, but the idea is that the goddess takes the essence and leaves the worshippers the material substance. This takes till about three a.m. next morning and then begins another important part of the ceremonies.

Some of the rice from the heap, over which the ram was sacrificed and its blood poured out, is taken and put in a flat basket, and some of the entrails of the buffalo are mixed with it. The intestines of the lamb, which was first killed, are put over the neck of a Māṭ and its liver is placed in his mouth,* while another Māṭ takes the basket of rice soaked in blood and mixed with the entrails of the buffalo. A procession is then formed with these two weird figures in the middle. The man with the liver in his mouth is worked up into a state of frantic excitement and is supposed to be inspired by the goddess. He has to be held by men on either side of him or kept fast with ropes to prevent his rushing away and all round him are the *eyyals* i.e. the small farmers, and the Māṭs flourishing clubs and swords, and throwing limes into the air to drive away the evil spirits. As the procession moves through the village, the people shout out 'Fand! Fand!' and the man who carries the basket sprinkles the rice soaked in blood over the houses to protect them from evil spirits. As he walks along he shouts out, at intervals, that he sees the evil spirits, and falls down in a faint. Then lambs have to be sacrificed on the spot and limes thrown into the air and coconuts broken to drive away the demons and bring the man to his senses. And so the procession moves through the village amid frantic excitement, till, as the day dawns, they return to the canopy, where the great mother is peacefully reposing.

At about ten a.m. a fresh round of ceremonies begins. Some meat is cut from the carcass of the buffalo and cooked with some chowam and then given to five little Māṭ boys, *saddāṭa* the innocents, as they are called. They are all covered over with a large cloth,

* Cf. pp. 100, 102 below.

and eat the food entirely concealed from view probably to prevent the evil spirits from seeing them, or the evil eye from striking them. And then some more food is served to the *Asahis* who have been for many hours, during the ceremonies of the night, chanting the praises of the goddess. After this the villagers bring their offerings. The Brahmana, who may not kill animals, bring rice and coconuts and other castes bring lambs, goats, sheep, fowls and buffaloes, which are all killed by the washermen, by cutting their throats, except the buffaloes, which are always killed by the *Madigas*, the lowest class of Outcastes. The heads are all cut off and presented to the goddess. This lasts till about three p.m. when the people go off to the house of the village carpenter, who has got ready a small wooden cart. On their arrival some cooked rice is offered to the cart, and a lamb sacrificed before it, and a new cloth and eight annas are given to the carpenter as his fee. The cart is then dragged by the washermen, to the sound of horns and tom-toms to the place of sacrifice. The heads and carcasses of the animals already sacrificed are first removed by the *Maas* and *Madigas*, except the head of the buffalo first offered, which remains in its place till all the ceremonies are finished, when the shrine is removed.

At about seven p.m. another series of ceremonies begins. First a lamb is sacrificed before the goddess and its blood mixed with some cooked rice, and at the same time a pig is buried up to the neck in a pit at the entrance of the village with its head projecting above the earth. The villagers go in procession to the spot, while one of the *Madigas* carries the rice, soaked in the blood of the lamb, in a basket. All the cattle of the village are then brought to the place and driven over the head of the unhappy pig,¹ which is of course trampled to death and as they pass over the pig the blood and rice are sprinkled upon them to preserve them from disease. Then, after this, follows the final ceremony

¹ Cf. p. 28 below

The image of the goddess is taken from the canopy by the washerman, and a Māligā takes the head of the buffalo with its foreleg in the mouth, the forehead and nostrils all smeared over with fat, and the earthen lamp still lighted on the top. They then all go in procession to the boundary of the village, first the men carrying the buffalo's head, next the washerman with the image, and last the small wooden cart. When the procession arrives at the extreme limit of the village lands, they go on, for about a furlong, into the lands of the neighbouring village. There the Aśā's first chant the praises of the goddess, then some turmeric is distributed to all the people, and finally the image is divested of all its ornaments and solemnly placed upon the ground and left there. The light on the head of the buffalo is extinguished, and the head itself carried off by the Māligā who takes it for a feast to his own house. The object of transporting the goddess to the lands of the next village is to transfer to that village the wrath of the deity, a precaution which does not show much faith in the temper of the goddess, nor much charity towards their neighbours!

Gudivada near Masulipatam. A somewhat different form of ceremonial prevails in some of the villages of the Telugu country nearer the coast. The village of Gudivada, about twenty miles from the important town of Masulipatam, may be taken as a good specimen of a well-to-do village in a prosperous district, and the ceremonies prevailing there are a fair sample of the cult of the village deities in these parts.

The name of the village deity at Gudivada is Pallalamma. Her image is the figure of a woman with four arms, and a leopard's head under her right foot, carved in bas-relief on a flat stone about three feet high, standing in an open compound, surrounded by a low stone wall. The pūjari who is a Śādra, gave me a full account of the rites and ceremonies. Weekly offerings are made every Sunday, when the pūjari washes the image with water and soap-nut seeds early in the morning, and smears it with turmeric

and kunkuma offers incense breaks a coconut and as is an offering to the image and a small piece which he afterwards eats himself. The village is visited daily by the villagers. (Kans' nala' lions and sheep are killed in the village by villagers who have made vows of abstinence and other restrictions. When a sheep is killed, a first portion is washed. The animal is then washed in front of the image by a Ma' gā, who cuts off its head with a large dagger. The blood is allowed to flow on the ground and nothing special is done with it. The head becomes the property of the priest, and the offerer takes away the carcass for a feast in his house. In many villages both in the Telugu and Tami' lands water is poured over the sheep, a lamb to see whether it shivers. If it shivers it is a sign that the goddess has accepted it. Where the people are economical they keep on pouring water till it does shiver to avoid the expense of procuring a second victim, but where they are more scrupulous it does not shiver it is taken as a sign that the goddess will not accept it and it is taken away.

A public festival is held whenever an epidemic breaks out. The headman of the village then gets a new earthenware pot, besmears it with turmeric and kunkuma and puts inside some dry brimmers some brass wire and earrings three pieces of kharra, three pieces of turmeric, three pieces of incense, a piece of dried coconut, a woman's cloth and two annas worth of copper—a strange collection of miscellaneous charms and offerings. The pot is then hung up in a tree near the image as a pledge that, if the epidemic disappears, the people will celebrate a festival.

When it does disappear a thatched shed of palm-leaf leaves is built near the image and a special image of clay adorned with turmeric and kunkuma is put inside and beneath it an earthen pot filled with turmeric and besmear. This pot is also smeared with turmeric and

* For this widespread superstition see Mr. Alfred Lyall *Andhra Pradesh*, pp. 43, 44, 45, 73 and 74.

kunkuma, adorned with margosa leaves, covered with an earthenware saucer, and carried in procession through the village during the day, to the exhilarating sound of pipes, horns, and tom-toms by the village potter who takes the rice and buttermilk for his perquisite and renews it every morning of the festival at the public expense. The duration of the festival depends on the amount of the subscriptions, but it always lasts for an odd number of days, excluding all numbers with a seven in them, e.g. 7, 17, 27, etc. During the night the barbers of the village chant the praises of the goddess, and the Māligā beat tom-toms near the image.

On the night before the day appointed for the offering of animal sacrifices by the villagers a male buffalo, called *Ileva* Pāṇi, is devoted to the deity, is sacrificed on behalf of the whole village. First, the buffalo is washed with water, smeared with yellow turmeric and red kunkuma, and then garlanded with flowers and the leaves of the sacred margosa tree. It is brought before the image, and a Māligā cuts off its head, if possible at one blow, over a heap of boiled rice, which he soaks with the blood. The right foreleg is then cut off and placed crosswise in its mouth according to the widespread custom prevailing in South India, the fat of the entrails is smeared over the eyes and forehead, and the head is placed in front of the image. A lighted lamp is placed, not as in the other villages on the head itself, but on the heap of rice soaked with blood. This rice is then put into a basket, and a Māligā, the village *utty* or sweeper, carries it round the site of the village, sprinkling it on the ground as he goes. The whole village goes with him, but there is no music or tom-toms. The people shout out as they go, *Pol! Pol!* i.e. 'Food! Food!' and clap their hands and wave their sticks above their heads to keep off the evil spirits. The rice offered to the goddess, but not soaked with blood, is then distributed to the people. What spirits the rice soaked in blood is supposed to feed is not clear, but the object of sprinkling the blood is evidently to ward off evil spirits.

and prevent them from coming near the village and a, ~~partly~~ the present idea is that they will be satiated with ~~food~~ and blood and not want to do any mischief. The ~~original~~ idea was, ~~possibly~~ quite different but this seems to be the intention of the ceremony in modern times.

On the next day early in the morning the clay image and the pot are washed and smeared afresh with turmeric and kunkuma. Incense and ~~beaded~~ rice are then offered as on other days and the pot is taken in procession round the village. When this has been done about midday each household brings an offering of beaded rice cakes, fruits and flowers and in addition the village as a whole contributes about two hundred or more ears of rice which is beaded near the pot. All these offerings are placed in a heap before the image. Then first a sheep or a buffalo is offered on behalf of the whole village. Having been duly washed and smeared with turmeric and kunkuma and decorated with mango leaves its head is cut off by a Mangi. The head is allowed to fall on the ground and some straw on this is thrown upon it to cover it up. The head is offered to the image by the headman of the village. After this various householders even Brahmins and Hindus bring animals for sacrifice. A bull is killed by a Mangi and then the heads are all presented and placed in a heap before the goddess. Sometimes an extraordinary number of animals are sacrificed on occasions of this kind as many as a thousand sheep on a single day. In a village like Guntur the number of victims is of course far less. The question of precedence in the offering of victims constantly gives rise to quarrels among the leading villagers. When I was once visiting Guntur there was a case pending before the ~~subdivisions~~ ~~the~~ ~~sub-divisional~~ ~~magistrate~~, between a ~~comrade~~ landowner and a village ~~man~~, as a village magistrate about this heathen rite. The heads are taken away by the ~~puaris~~ ~~patana~~ washermen, barbers, ~~Mans~~ and Mangis and others who take any official part in the sacrifice. The carcasses of the

private sacrifices are taken away by the offerers, and that of the public victim belongs to the headman of the village. The rice, fruit, etc. are distributed among the various officials. The function lasts from about ten a.m. to five p.m.

In the evening, a cart is brought to the image with nine pointed stakes standing upright in it, two at each of the four corners and one in the centre. On each stake a young pig, a lamb, or a fowl is impaled alive. A *Māā* called a *Pambala* i.e. hereditary priest, then sits in the cart dressed in female attire holding in his hand the clay image of the goddess which was made for the festival. The cart is dragged with ropes to the extreme boundary of the village lands, and both cart and ropes are left beyond the boundary. The *Pambalas* take away the animals, which all die during the procession, as their share of the offerings.

Living animals impaled in many villages. This cruel ceremony of impaling live animals is quite common in the eastern part of the Telugu country,¹ and I have come across it in many villages that I have visited. The Rev F. N. Alexander the veteran C.M.S. missionary who lived over fifty years at Ellore, told me that he witnessed it in the town of Ellore the first year that he went there, and wrote a letter to the *Madras Mail* describing it. As a result of his letter, the practice was forbidden by the Government. So now at Ellore the animals are tied on to the stakes without being impaled but in many villages near Ellore the custom still survives of impaling the unfortunate animals alive. Sometimes there are only four stakes on the cart, sometimes five, and sometimes more. It is not often that there are as many as nine. In one of the villages of the Kurnool district, I found that a similar barbarity was practised in connexion with the hook swinging ceremony. On the fifth day of the festival in honour of Ankalamma, a large car is constructed, with an arrangement of poles projecting

¹ Cf. pp. 59, 65, 66.

about 20 feet in the air. A sheep is then suspended from the pole by iron hooks fastened through the muscles of its back and a band round its middle and swung round and round. Two or three of the older men in the village said that they had often seen men swing like this with iron hooks fastened into their backs, and that it did not hurt. As soon as the sheep is swung up, buffaloes, sheep and goats are sacrificed and the car is then dragged in procession through the village.

A cruel pig sacrifice. Sometimes, when there is cattle disease, a pig is buried up to its neck at the boundary of the village, a heap of boiled rice is deposited near the spot and then all the cattle of the village are driven over the unhappy pig.¹ It is not the custom at Godavada to sprinkle anything on the cattle as they pass over the poor animal, as is done elsewhere.

There is a remarkable parallel to this form of sacrifice in a description quoted by Mr. E. Thurston, in his *Ethnographical Notes in Southern India*,² of an ancient custom among the Lambadis, a wandering tribe of South India:

In former times the Lambadis, before setting out on a journey, used to procure a live pig and bury it in the ground up to its shoulders, and then drive their loaded bullocks over the unfortunate animal. In proportion to the bullocks brought by tramping, he had to death, so their burden in a successive journey increased."

It is possible that this custom of driving the cattle over the head of a buried pig may be connected with the worship of an agricultural goddess, since in ancient Greece the pig was sacred to agricultural deities, e.g. Aphrodite, Adonis, and Demeter, but it may also be a survival of some former custom of infanticide or human sacrifice such as prevailed among the Lambadis.

An old man in the Kurmasal district once described to me the account that he had received from his fore-

¹ This is the practice in the Hindu *dola* (dolls) swing festival celebrated in honour of Durgā, the wife of Śiva. Cf. pp. 2, 78, 82, 83.

² See p. 55, 66.

³ P. 307.

fathers of the ceremony observed when founding a new village. An auspicious site is selected and an auspicious day, and then in the centre of the site is dug a large hole, in which are placed different kinds of grain, small pieces of the five metals, gold, silver, copper, iron, and lead, and a large stone, called *bedda rayer* or navel-stone standing about three and a half feet above the ground, very like the ordinary boundary stones seen in the fields. And then, at the entrance of the village in the centre of the main street, where most of the cattle pass in and out on their way to and from the fields, they dig another hole and bury a pig alive. This ceremony would be quite consistent with either of the explanations suggested as to the origin of pig burying. The pig may be buried at the entrance to the village as the emblem of fertility and strength, to secure the prosperity of the agricultural community, the fertility of the fields, and the health and fertility of the cattle. Or it may equally be a substitute for an original human sacrifice. The idea that a new building or institution must be inaugurated by the sacrifice of a human life is very common all over India. To this day there is often a panic among the villagers who live near the banks of a river where a bridge is about to be built, because they think that one or more of their babies are sure to be required to bury under the foundations of the first pier. On one of my visits to Kalasapad, in the Cuddapah district, the missionary told me that, when a new ward was opened for their local mission dispensary no one would go into it because the people imagined that the first to go in would be the needful sacrifice. Their fears were allayed by a religious service at the opening of the ward, but had it been a Hindu hospital perhaps a goat or a sheep would have been killed as a substitute for the human victim.

The idea of substitution, too, is quite common in India. In the hook swinging ceremony described above,¹

during an epidemic a washerman carries the earthenware pot, half full of buttermilk and adorned with margosa leaves, round the village to the sound of tom-toms. As it goes round the washerman stops at each house and the wife comes out and pours water from the pot on the ground and does reverence to the pot, stopping the goddess out to let any evil spirit come to the house, and then she puts some rice and buttermilk into it. When it is full, it is taken back to the shrine and another brought in its place. As this procession continues for fifteen days the accumulation of rice and buttermilk must be considerable. It is ultimately consumed by the washermen, potters, Māls and Mālgās, who take part in the festival. The real sacrifice begins on the sixteenth day and lasts for a month. A clothe thread and all the rice and buttermilk collected from the villagers are offered to the image. The images themselves are smeared with turmeric and dots of kumkum are put in them, and finally on the last day a male buffalo and *Antelope* / *Antelope* is devoted to the goddess, brought before the image and its head cut off by the head Mālgā of the town. The head is caught in a vessel and a new rice is some boiled rice and then the head, with the right turning in the mouth, is placed before the shrine on a flat silver basket, with the rice and head in another basket just below it. A lighted lamp is placed in the head and then another Mālgā carries it on his own head round the village with a new cloth tied in the head of the victim tied round his waist. This is regarded here and elsewhere as a very unpropitious and dangerous office, and the headman of the village has to offer considerable inducements to persuade a Mālgā to undertake it. Ropes are tied round his body and arms and held fast by men walking behind him as he goes round, to prevent his being carried off by evil spirits and times are cut in half and thrown into the air, so that the demons may catch at them instead of at the man. It is believed that gigantic demons sit on the tops of tall trees ready to swoop down and carry him away, in

order to get the rice and the buffalo's head. The idea of carrying the head and rice round a village, so the people said, is to draw a kind of cordon on every side of it and prevent the entrance of the evil spirits. Should any one in the town refuse to submit for the festival, his house is omitted from the procession and left to the tender mercies of the devils. This procession is called *batu Annamam* 'ann' in this district means, rent free lands, are held from Government by certain families of Mālgā for performing it. Besides the buffalo, large numbers of sheep and goats and fowls are sacrificed, each householder giving at least one animal. The head Mālgā who the animals takes the carcasses and distributes the flesh among the members of his family. Often cases come into the courts to decide who has the right to kill them. As the sacrifice cannot wait for the tedious processes of the law, the elders of the village settle the question at once, pending an appeal to the courts. But in the town of Masulipatam a Mālgā is specially licensed by the Municipality for the purpose, and all disputes are avoided.

Uganda. At Uganda there is only one Grāma-Devatā, Nānakamma (from Nānu a Tamil word meaning 'to beat', but she is very untempered, they told me and gives much trouble. Curiously enough, the present puāri is a woman of the fisherman caste. The office was hereditary in her family and she is the only surviving member of it. A male relative acts as deputy puāri. Offerings are made to Nānakamma every day doubtless on account of her temper. One custom I found observed here which is not uncommon in these parts. When a victim's head has been cut off, it is put before the shrine and water poured on it. The offerer then waits to see whether the mouth opens. If it does, it is a sign that the sacrifice is accepted. Another ceremony observed here is signification and, doubtless, a relic of the primitive idea

¹ *Shalasti* for presentation of the offering.

² See p. 55 n. 1, above.

of sacrifice. As soon as the victim is killed, the offerer dips his finger in the blood and puts it on his own forehead.

The annual festival of this goddess lasts for a whole month, ending on the New Year's day of the Telugu calendar. During this festival the procession of pots is observed with special ceremony. Six brass pots, each about two feet high, with the figure of a cobra springing from below the neck and rising over the mouth of the pot, are draped with women's cloths and carried round the town on men's head. Nothing is put inside them, but, as they go round, the women of each house come out, pour water on the feet of the bearers, and make offerings of rice and fruit. These are solemnly presented to the pots by the bearers, and some powder is applied to the two small feet that project at the base of each pot, and form a sort of frame sitting on the bearer's head. The bearer then takes a little of the turmeric powder that is already on the foot of the pot and puts it into the dish in which the offering was brought, with a few margosa leaves from a bundle that he carries with him. The dish is returned to the woman who offered the gifts, which become the property of the *pūari*. The women and children of the family mark their foreheads with the turmeric, and put the margosa leaves in their hair. This is called *Amma-vari Prasadam*.¹ As they go round, the *pūaris* dance to the sound of tom-toms.

On the last day of the festival, when a buffalo is sacrificed, a curious ceremony takes place which is said to be very common in the villages of this district. After the head is cut off by the *vetty*² who is a *Madighi*, the blood is collected in a basin and nine kinds of grain and *gram*³ are put into it. The basin is then put before the idol inside the shrine, and the

¹ The turmeric and the margosa leaves are a gift of grace (*Samariti*) *praśada* grace from the goddess. Food and water from the table of a Hindu god given to the worshippers in the temple are called *prasada*.

² See above p. 56.

³ *Gram* is coarse lentils.

doors of the shrine are kept shut for three days. On the fourth day the doors are opened the sag-lated mass of baked grain and gram is carefully washed, and the grain and gram are separated on the ground behind the shrine in order to see which of the various kinds of grain has sprouted. At the next village assembly to watch the result and whichever is found to have sprouted is regarded as marked out by the goddess as the right kind of grain to sow that year. This method of determining which crop to sow is common in both the Gajalavar and Maanipatam districts. In these countries in Nizam's time the application of the blood is especially noticeable. As soon as the victim is killed, a small quantity of the blood is smeared on the sides of the door posts of the shrine, the deity grasps the finger in the blood and applies it to his forehead, then all the other people present do the same, and afterwards some turmeric and some turmeric powder are mixed with the blood and a little of the mixture is sprinkled on the head of the Maliga who holds the basin to catch the blood.

When an epidemic of cholera breaks out another goddess called Marakamma, is installed in the place of the Nizamamma. A big of margosa wood about three feet high and six inches in diameter is cut and roughly carved at the top into the shape of a head, and then fixed in the ground with a garland of leaves and flowers over it. Then the procession of the earthen pot half filled with buttermilk and rice is conducted, very much in the same way as at Maanipatam, every day in the epidemic subsides. After that some ten or twelve small carts are made about six feet square with three pointed stakes sticking up on each side on which live animals are impaled as in other parts of the Telugu country.¹ The carts are partly filled with baked rice and curries stuff prepared at the shrine the blood of the victims sacrificed being poured over the rice. I was told that live animals were only impaled if a cart did

¹ See p. 42 above.

² See p. 42 above.

not move properly as it was dragged to the boundary since that is regarded as a sign that the goddess is angry and needs to be appeased.

After. The number of victims slaughtered at some of these festivals is enormous. At Pore which is a town of considerable size and importance I was told that at the annual festival of Mahashakti about a thousand animals are killed in one day, rich people sending as many as twenty or thirty. The blood then flows down into the fields behind the place of sacrifice in a regular flood, and carts full of sand are brought to cover up what remains on the spot. The heads are piled up in a heap about fifteen feet high in front of the shrine and a large earthen basin about one and a half feet in diameter is then filled with gingerly oil and put on the top of the heap, a thick cotton wick being placed in the basin and lighted. The animals are all worshipped with the usual ceremonies, their heads raised to the forehead before they are killed. The slaughter of victims goes on all day.

At midnight about twenty or twenty five buffaloes are sacrificed. Their heads are cut off by a Maliga priest and with their carcases are thrown upon large heaps of rice which have been presented to the goddess. In the rice is soaked with blood.

The subsequent ceremonies illustrate again the varieties of local custom. The rice is collected in about ten or fifteen large baskets, and instead of being carried by a Maliga is carried in a large cart drawn by buffaloes or bullocks with the Maliga priest seated on it. As the cart moves along Maligas sprinkle the rice on the streets and on the walls of the houses shouting "Pou! Pou!" (Pou! Pou!). A large body of men of different castes, Sudras, Karmas and Brahmins go with the procession, but only the Maligas and Mahas (the two sections of the Brahmins) about Pore. The rest following in silence. They have only two or three torches to show them the way and no bonfires nor music. Apparently the idea is that, if they make a noise or display a blaze of light, they will attract the evil spirits,

who will swoop down on them and take them some day though in other villages it is supposed that a great deal of noise and flourishing of sticks will keep the evil spirits at bay. Before this procession starts, the heads of the buffaloes are placed in front of the shrine with the right foreleg in the mouth the fat from the entrails smeared about half an inch thick over the whole face and a large earthen lamp on the top of each head. The Panhars' priest then tells and chant a long story about Gangamma till daybreak. About eight a.m. they put the buffalo heads with the lighted lamps upon them into separate baskets and these are carried in procession through the town to the sound of tom-toms. All castes follow shouting and singing. In former times I was told there was a good deal of fighting and disturbance during this procession, but now the police maintain order. When the procession arrives at the municipal limits the heads are thrown over the boundary and left there. The people then all bathe in the canal and return home.

On the last day of the festival which I may remark, lasts for about three months a small cart is made of margosa wood and a stage is fixed at each of the four corners. A pig and a cow are tied to each stage where a fruit, called *dakshina* is imposed on it instead of the animal. A yellow cloth sprinkled with the blood of the buffaloes is tied round the sides of the cart, and some margosa leaves are tied round the cloth. A Panhar sits on the cart, to which are fastened two large ropes each about 200 yards long. Then men of all castes, without distinction lay hold of the ropes and drag the cart round the town to the sound of tom-toms and music. Finally it is brought outside the municipal limits and left there, the Outcastes taking away the animals and fruits.

Sometimes, I was told, animals are sacrificed to Gangamma by the people in ~~the~~ in the corners of their own houses. They then clean the wall of

the house outside with cow-dung and make three horizontal lines with *kunsuma* (a red paste of turmeric and lime), with a dot above and below, and a semi-circle on the right side with a dot in the middle, thus:—



The symbol on the right represents the sun and moon, that on the left is the Śaivite sectarian mark. They sacrifice to these symbols sheep, goats and fowls. It is curious that, in these private sacrifices at home, they pour water on the sheep and goats to see whether they shiver, as a sign of acceptance,¹ though this is not done in the public sacrifices at Elore.

Dharmasrudam near Elore. At a village called Dharmasrudam, about sixteen miles from Elore, where the main features of the festivals are the same as those found elsewhere, there are two or three peculiarities, which deserve notice. The ordinary grāma devatās of the village are E. sramma, Gangamma, Mutyalamma and Raveamma, who are represented by four stone pillars about six feet high, with figures of women carved on them, standing in an open field on the outskirts of the village, but when an epidemic breaks out Mutyalamma, Gangamma, Anamma and Mahālakshmi are the deities propitiated, and special images are made of them. These of the first three are made of clay, but that of Mahālakshmi is made of turmeric kneaded into a paste. Then, again, it is noticeable that a Brāhman acts as *pūjārī* of Mahālakshmi, a washerman as *pūjārī* of Gangamma, and a potter as *pūjārī* of Anamma. The Brāhman *pūjārī* presides over the worship for the greater part of the festival, which lasts for about three months, and during that time the people come almost every day and offer flowers, fruits, coconuts, camphor and incense, but no animal sacrifices. All the time, too, some nautch-

¹ See p. 55 above.

girls come and dance in a booth erected in front of the image and mark themselves by a state of frenzy during which they are supposed to be possessed by the deities and utter verses to the worshippers. When the ceremony begins to close, the *brāhmin* *pūjari* chants his part of the *prayer* and departs.

Then on that afternoon and evening animal sacrifices are offered to the deity. On the first animal killed which is generally a goat, water is poured from a brass vessel to see if it stirs. If it does it is taken as a good omen that the goddess is propitiated and the disease will disappear. Then her animals are brought and in accordance with a very curious series of traditions in the Telugu country a warthman kills the sheep, goats and cows and a *Māṅgik* beheades. The heads of the sheep and goats as well as of the buffaloes have the right fore legs put round in the mouth, the face smeared with fat from the carcass, and a lighted lamp placed above them. The heads are caught in a basket, hung round the tree and the cow and bull are sprinkled round the village while a *Māṅgik* carries on his own head the head of a buffalo exactly as is done elsewhere. Here the goats are taken to prevent any person from another village taking away any of the rice and land lest the other village should get all the benefit of the sacrifice and so a curse descend on the unhappy villages who have feared it. The ceremony of impaling live animals on stakes fixed round a wooden cart and dragging them off to the boundary of the village is also practised here.

Bhimadole near Eluru. At another village, called *Bhimadole* about twenty miles from *Eluru* I came across one of the few instances I have met with of any direct connection between the harvest and the worship of a village goddess. There is an annual festival held there about harvest time in November or December lasting one day which is a *ṭhōṭa* Tuesday. About half a ton of rice is boiled in the middle of the village taken

* See page 54

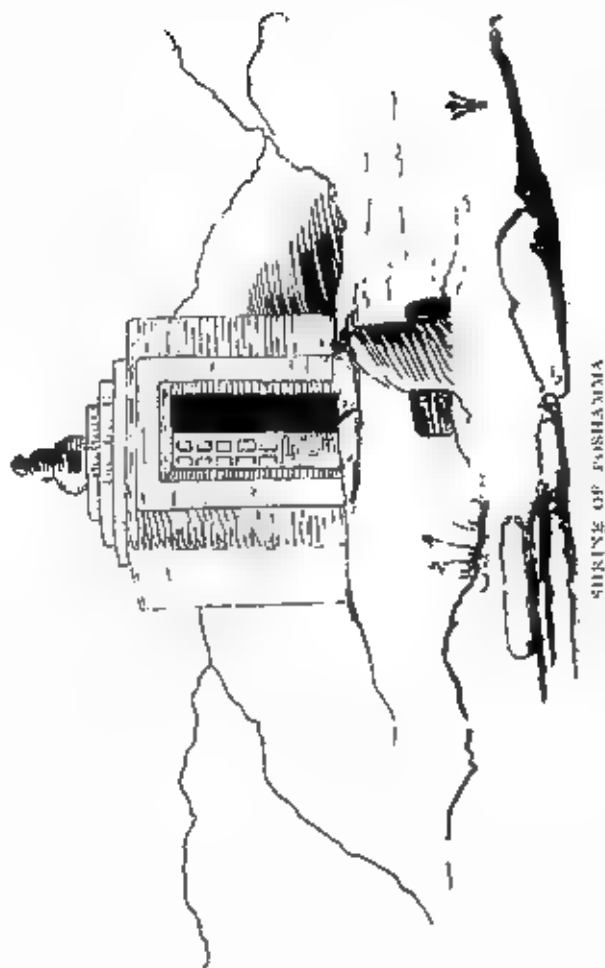
* See p. 28

to the shrine and presented in a heap before the image, with a lighted lamp on the top of it, made of rice flour kneaded into a paste and lasting about one pint (Fig. 1). Sometimes a pot is put in the ground to the east of the fire by the washermen; incense and camphor are burnt while the people make *namaskaram* (salutation with folded hands raised to the forehead) to the image. As many as two hundred sheep and goats are then killed, and fowls are brought by the poorer people. In this festival the rice soaked in the 'blood' of the victims is not sprinkled in the streets of the village nor over the houses, but each man gives a handful of it to one of his field servants (an *attasali*) who takes and sprinkles it over his master's fields. Three handfuls of the crop are cut on the same day to inaugurate the harvest. No buffaloes are sacrificed during this festival.

On the other hand, when an epidemic breaks out there is a special festival in which five or six buffaloes are sacrificed as well as about three hundred sheep and goats. The buffaloes are a different race. (One special buffalo called *Pudala Veta* great sacrifice is reserved to the end and kept at about ten years old.) Nothing special is done with the blood of the other buffaloes nor with that of the sheep and goats, but the blood of the *Pudala Veta* is allowed to flow on to some of the rice, as soon as the head is severed, and both head and carcass are placed upon the rice heap. The head, as usual, has the right fore leg put in the mouth, with fat smeared over the face and a lighted lamp above it.

At about eleven p.m. the head is carried by a *Malla*, not by a *Mangai* in this village, on his own head three times round the boundaries of the village site, and the rice soaked in blood is sprinkled by the *Malla* as in the ground, as they go and on any cattle they happen to meet, accompanied by the same weird and excited procession as elsewhere.

The illustration facing this page represents a shrine of *Pushanma*, a goddess worshipped by the *Malla*. On the top of the shrine stands an earthenware lamp.



SHRINE OF FUSHAYAMA



KUTTANDEVAR

CHAPTER V

MODES OF WORSHIP IN THE CANARESE COUNTRY

THE Canarees are closely allied ethnologically to the Telugus and we should naturally expect therefore to find a close connexion between the ceremonies used by the two peoples in the worship of their village goddesses. A brief account of the ceremonies used in different parts of the Canarese country will show how far this is actually the case.

Bellary District. In the Bellary district Durgamma,¹ Sunkalamma and Uramma are very commonly worshipped. Uramma means simply the village goddess, and is equivalent to the general term grāma-devatā. Her festival is not celebrated annually but when there is a specially good crop, or when cholera or plague break out. The following account of it was given me by an Ashā of a village near Bellary, and may be taken as describing fairly the general type of such festivals and sacrifices throughout the district.

We will suppose that cholera has broken out in the village. The villagers then make vows to offer the sacrifice if the epidemic ceases. The day appointed for the festival is invariably a Tuesday, and on the previous Tuesday a basin-shaped earthen lamp, filled with oil and furnished with a stout cotton wick, is placed in the house of the *Reddy* (village magistrate) and kept lighted till the festival and all the ceremonies are ended. The carpenter also prepares beforehand a wooden image of the goddess and a small cart, while

¹ Durgā is one of the many names of Kālī, the goddess of Siva.

a *panda* (booth) of leaves and cloths with a raised platform inside and festoons of flowers hung in front, is made ready in an open space in the village. On the appointed Tuesday a sheep or goat is first sacrificed at the carpenter's house and the carcass given to the *talasari* (village servants, generally Bhojas by caste).

The image is then put on the cart about sunset, and taken by the villagers in procession to the booth. In some villages the washerman lays clean cloths on the ground so that the men who carry the image from the cart to the booth may not tread on the earth. Then the people proceed to the house of the flower seller, who is by caste a *Gura* and generally a *Lingayat*¹ by religion, and bring thence a kind of cradle, made of pith and flowers together with a pot of toddy, a looking glass, some mirrors and other articles used in worship. The cradle and looking glass are hung up in front of the booth, and the other things are placed in front of the image. A looking glass, I was told, is considered very auspicious and is used by all castes in various religious ceremonies. Next, the lighted lamp is brought in procession from the Reddy's house and placed before the image by some man belonging to the Reddy's family. Four measures of barley rice are then poured in a heap before the image where flowers, betel leaves, nuts, plantains, and coconuts are offered, and camphor and incense burnt.

When the preliminaries have been duly performed, the buffalo which from the close of the last festival, has been dedicated to the goddess and reserved for sacrifice is brought from the Outcaste quarters to the *panda*; in solemn procession, the *Akkis*, some ten or twelve in number, dancing before it and singing songs in honour of the goddess. It has been kept the whole day without food or water and is garlanded with flowers and smeared with turmeric and red kunkuma. This

¹ A South Indian *Sivaya* sect named *Lingayats* because each wears a small *linga* (Siva's phallic emblem) hung round his neck in a reliquary.

buffalo is called *Ganda-Kona* or husband-buffalo, and, according to the traditional story, represents the Outcaste husband who pretended to be a Brahman and married the Brahman girl, now worshipped as Uramma. A fresh buffalo is always dedicated immediately after the festival, lest the goddess should be left a widow. When it arrives at the pandal, it is laid on its side upon the ground and its head is cut off by one of the Mālgas with the sacrificial chopper. Its neck is placed over a small pit, which has been dug to receive the blood, and the entrails are taken out and placed in the pit with the blood. The right leg is then cut off below the knee and put cross-wise in the mouth. Some fat from the entrails is placed on the forehead and a small earthenware lamp, about as large as a man's two hands, with a wick as thick as his thumb, is placed on the fat and kept there lighted, till the festival is over. Some of the blood and entrails are then mixed with some boiled rice and placed in a new basket, which a Mālgā, stripped naked, places on his head and takes round the boundary of the village fields, accompanied by a washerman carrying a torii, and followed by a few of the villagers. He sprinkles the rice, blood and entrails all round the boundary. The greatest care is taken to see that none of the blood from the pit in front of the pandal, where the buffalo was killed, is taken away by any one from another village, as they believe that in that case all the benefits of the sacrifice would be transferred to the other village. In former days men who stealthily took away the blood were chased and murdered. As this cannot be done under British rule, a strict patrol is kept all round the place where the blood lies, and no one from any other village is allowed to loiter near the spot.

Next day, Wednesday, about four p.m., villagers, who have made vows, bring sheep for sacrifice and offerings of boiled rice, fruits, cocoanuts, etc., with incense and camphor. I was told that cows were not offered to Uramma. After the sheep has been killed, the head is cut off and water is poured on the nose. If the mouth opens, it is regarded as a good omen. The

carcasses are taken away by the offerers to their own homes as a feast for the family. The heads are all put together and distributed to those of the village artisans and *shikalis* who are meat-eaters.

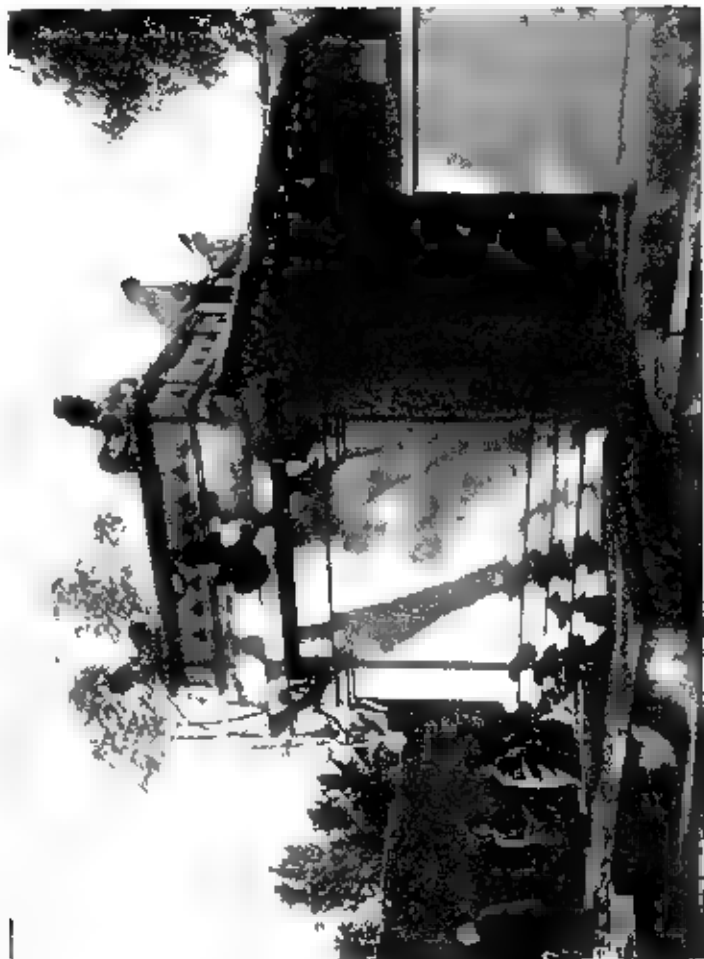
On Thursday about four p.m. the flesh of the buffalo, which was sacrificed on Tuesday evening and must be by this time rather high is cooked in front of the pandal and part of it is first offered to the goddess, with some boiled rice on five separate leaves. The *Asahis* make the offering with songs and dances, the breaking of coconuts, and burning of incense and camphor and prostrations on the ground, *shasthagam*. For this part of their service they receive twenty pice (about 1½) four pice for each leaf not an extravagant sum. Then they take the five leaves away and eat the flesh and rice at some distance from the pandal, where it was cooked. These offerings to the goddess must be eaten in the spot and are not allowed to be taken home. The rest of the flesh is given to the *butastas* and *talarias*, who cook and eat some of it in the spot and take away the remainder. After sunset the goddess is put on the wooden cart and dragged in procession to the boundary of the village an *Asahi* walking in the front and carrying on his head the head of the buffalo. When they come to the limit of the village and they leave the image on their own side of the boundary and there it stays. This ceremony ends the festival.

Belary Town.—Some what similar festivals are held periodically to propitiate *Sankamma*, the goddess of small-pox and measles, and *Maramma*, the goddess of cholera. In the town of Belary there is a shrine of *Irgamma*¹ which consists only of an ant-hill, with a plain stone above about thirty feet long six deep and eight or ten high built over it. The story goes that an old woman many years ago was washing an image of *Irgamma* in this spot when the goddess appeared to her and said that she was *Irgamma* of Belary, that

¹ See p. 71, n. 1, above.

she lived in the ant hill and ought to be worshipped there. The ant hill grew in size in the course of years and a shrine was built. The present priest who is a female or matriarch by caste says that in the time of his father about forty years ago, a large snake lived in the ruined wall behind the shrine and used to come out and eat eggs and milk placed for it before the shrine. Apparently it very rarely makes its appearance now.

There is an annual festival to this goddess in February when male buffaloes, sheep, goats, and fowls are offered in sacrifice. When a buffalo is sacrificed, the right leg is as usual cut off and placed in its mouth and fat is smeared over its forehead, with a lighted lamp on the top. Then the offerer stands with his back to the goddess asking for a boon, and if at that time the mouth of the buffalo opens, he thinks that his prayer has been granted; otherwise he goes away disappointed. The inhabitants of Bery conjectured that the practice of putting the right foreleg in the mouth was originally connected with this last ceremony its object being to prevent *viper mortis* setting in at once and to keep the mouth open and the jaws in biting seems to deceive the superstitious. But this does not seem to be a fair explanation of an widely spread custom. The skins of the buffaloes offered in sacrifice are used for the drums employed in worship and the carcasses are given to the *jutmates* and *talaris* in the vicinity of the shrine. People who do not approve of the slaughter of animals cut off the right ear of a goat or sheep and after carrying it round the temple offer it to the priest. The blood of animals offered in sacrifice in February is not sprinkled round either the shrine or the town. People who offer animal sacrifices also offer boiled rice with them. The rice is heaped on leaves in front of the shrine turmeric and kunkuma are sprinkled over it and then it is distributed to the people present. Tuesdays and Fridays are regarded as especially auspicious days for the worship of this deity and are observed as days of fasting by the *pūjāris* of the shrine.



SHRINE OF PLAGUE AMMA, BANGALORE



INTERIOR OF SHRINE OF PLAGIA-AMMA, BANGALORE

the water for use at Bologny. They offer food and flowers, perfume, incense, as the goddess turns the wheel. Then last and the best and greatest of the five goddesses.

[illegible][illegible]

is mixed with some boiled rice in a large earthen pot, and taken at night round the village by the *Tu* and sprinkled on the ground. The *Māligas* go with him carrying torches and beating tom-toms. The object of this ceremony is as usual to keep off evil spirits.

Iśakēśa. *Pūjamma* is especially the goddess of the *Māligas* in these parts, and the buffalo sacrifice forms an important part of the annual festival whenever she is worshipped. At a group of villages some ten miles from Bangalore near Yelahanka, I found that she was represented by no image but by a small earthen lamp which is always kept lighted.

Śrīring near Bangalore. At one shrine on the outskirts of Bangalore, where there are seven goddesses viz. *Annamma* the presiding goddess (*Channavaramma*, *Mavevaramma*, *Maramma* (the goddess of children), *Uśaramma* (goddess of swollen breast), *Kāśamma* (goddess of cough), and *Śikharamma* (goddess of scurf, pox and measles) the fire-walking ceremony forms an important part of the annual festival, which lasts for ten days. A trench is dug in front of the shrine about thirty feet long five feet wide and one and a half feet deep and washed with a solution of cow-dung to purify it. About thirty seers of boiled rice are then brought on the fifth day of the festival and offered to the goddess before the trench. It is all put into the trench and some ten seers of curds are poured over it and then distributed to the people, who eat some on the spot and some at home. A cart-load of firewood is then spread over the trench, set alight and left to burn for about three hours till the wood becomes a mass of red-hot embers. When all is ready the people assemble and the *pūjari* whose turn it is to conduct the worship, first bathes to purify himself and then, amid the deafening din of trumpets, tom-toms, and cymbals, and the clapping of hands, walks with bare feet slowly and deliberately over the glowing embers the whole length of the trench towards the shrine of the seven goddesses. After him about thirty or forty women walk over the red-hot embers

with lighted *brattis* on their heads. Such is the power of the goddess, the people told me, that no one is injured. The *pūjari* of the shrine declared positively that the people put no oil nor anything else on their feet when they walk over.

Mysore City At Mysore City, where the fire-walking ceremony is also performed, I asked three men who had walked over the trench why they were not hurt, and their reply was that people who were without sin were never hurt! I can only say that in this case their faces sadly belied their characters.

The following account of the worship of village deities in the City of Mysore, and the note on the worship of village deities in the Canarese country generally was kindly given to me by the late Mr. Ramakrishna Rao, then palace officer at Mysore.

The *Maris* of Mysore are said to be seven in number and all the seven are sisters.

- (1) *Bisal Mari* (the sun),
- (2) *Goonal Mari*;
- (3) *Kel Mari* (the earthen pot)
- (4) *Yeeranagere Mari*
- (5) *Hiridevathi* (the eldest sister),
- (6) *Chammandamma*,
- (7) *Uttahnahamma*.

Of the seven *Maris*, *Hiridevathi* is said to be the eldest. Every year the *Mari Jatra* (*i.e.* festival) is held, generally in the month of February. It lasts for about four weeks, and consists of the following.

- (1) *Mari Sara*;
- (2) *Mari Made*;
- (3) *Mari Sidi*;
- (4) *Kolammans Habba*.

each taking nearly a week's time.

(1) *Mari Sara*. On Sunday of the first week of the *Mari Jatra*, at about six p.m., the people and *pūjaris*, called *Torayars*, collect at a consecrated place in the fort (the place now used is a little to the east of the southern entrance to the palace), cook rice there, and colour the cooked rice red with the blood of a sheep or

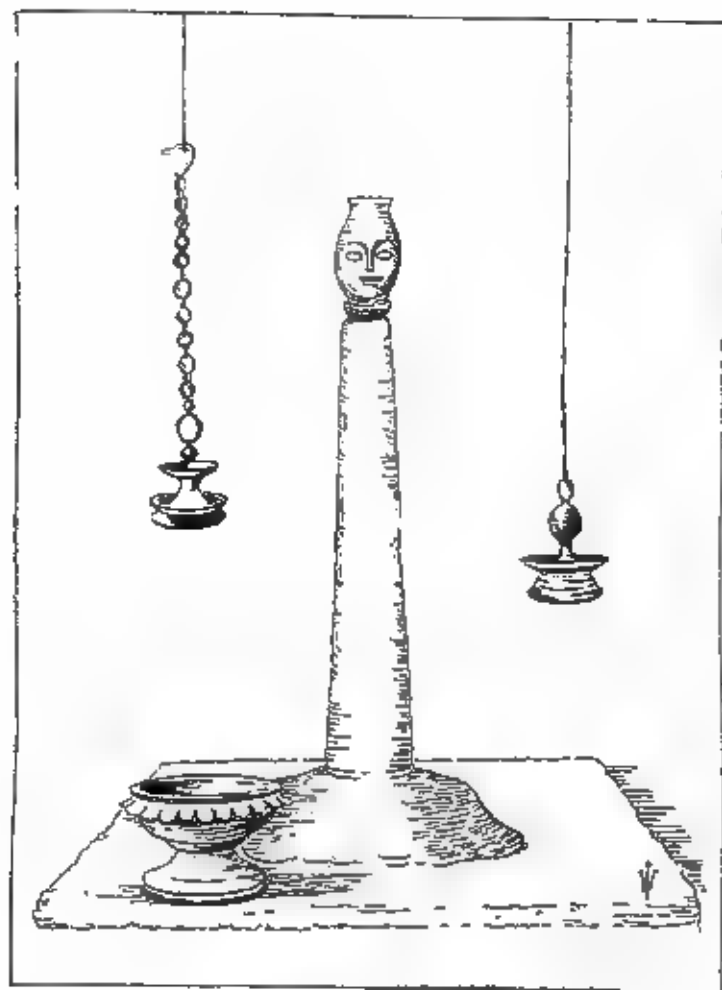


IMAGE OF HILIAMMA IN VILLAGE NEAR MYSORE CITY

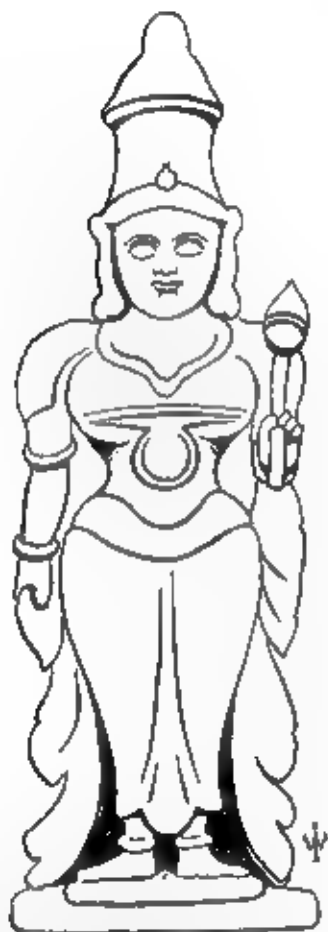


IMAGE OF GODDESS, WORSHIPPED ESPECIALLY
BY THE GOLDSMITHS OF MYSORE CITY

goat killed in the spot. After offering the rice to the Bha. Mari they take it with the carcass of the goat to the south gate and westwards, going round the fort in the inner circle, dragging the carcass of the goat on the ground and so, the way sprinkling the rice over the streets. This is said to purify the place lying inside the circle traced in their course. Then they arrive at the point where they started. They then convey the carcass and the remaining rice to a spot near the shrine of Mafodvara, situated in the quarters where they live. Then the entrails of the goat are roasted and, with the rice, divided into three equal parts and made into three balls which are given away to the *(Astrak)* for their services in foot-tuning during the rice sprinkling ceremony.

(2) *Mari Mode*. On Monday of the second week the Toveyars throw away all their old earthen pots used for cooking and get their houses whitewashed. They get new pots, prepare *Akkhadh*² in them, cover them with earthen lids and put brails on them. At about six p.m. the brails are carried by females to a consecrated place (platform) known as the *Uashige* and placed in front of a *kunna kannadi* (a looking glass used as a symbol of the goddess). Two sheep or goats are killed in sacrifice on the spot and all the flesh is distributed amongst the families of Toveyars. Then done, the *Kakkhadh* pots are carried by females in procession to the Bha. Mari shrine clothed about four feet wide being spread all along the way on which the procession walks, that they may not tread on the earth. The *Kakkhadh* in all the pots is offered to the Bha. Mari and heaped up on a cloth in front of the Bha. Mari image. The females return home with the empty pots which will henceforth be used for cooking in their families. The heap of *Kakkhadh* then becomes the property of the washerman *Pu. Mari*, who distributes it amongst his friends and relatives. At the end of this

² A section of the Outcastes

³ A dish of rice and butter-milk.

week the Mane Manchi shrine, which remains closed all the year, is opened. It contains a hole resembling an ant-hill, which is said to be the abode of an unknown serpent, to which the name of Mane Manchamma is given. Prayers are offered here, chiefly by the men that are to swing on the Sidi, but also by the man that performs the ' Human Sacrifice Ceremony ' which is now a semblance, not a reality. The Toreyar caste men generally bring from their houses bunches of plantains and store them in this shrine. They are placed there to remain till the Sidi is over after which they become the property of the families by whom they were brought to the shrine.

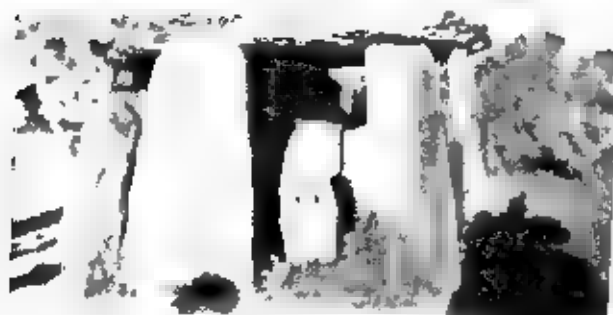
(3) *Mari Sidi*. This occupies the third week of the Jatra. On the Sunday before the Monday on which the Sidi takes place the Human Sacrifice Ceremony called *Bali* (Sanskrit for offering) is performed. It begins at midnight and lasts till dawn. The man appointed for the Bali is made to lie down, a piece of cloth fully covering his body. This takes place on the same spot where the rice for the Mari Sattu (already explained) was prepared. A carpenter begins the ceremony by touching the man lying down with a cluster of flowers of the coconut tree. The Chakras¹ keep low-turning, while the carpenter dances round the victim, singing songs. Fires are lit all round. The carpenter closes his dance by touching the victim again with his cluster of flowers about daybreak. The people present carry the victim (the Bali man) to the Mane Manchi shrine, where he takes rest and waits straight home.

On Monday the carpenter who performed the Bali ceremony the previous day gets the Bali Car fitted up. It is ready about five p.m. for the swing. The men to swing² on the Sidi are kept without food. They take a cold bath, dress themselves on the pal of Gaidige (mentioned in connexion with Made³) and then go to the palace, where they get a pre-

¹ See p. 81, s. 1.

² See p. 80, s. 1.

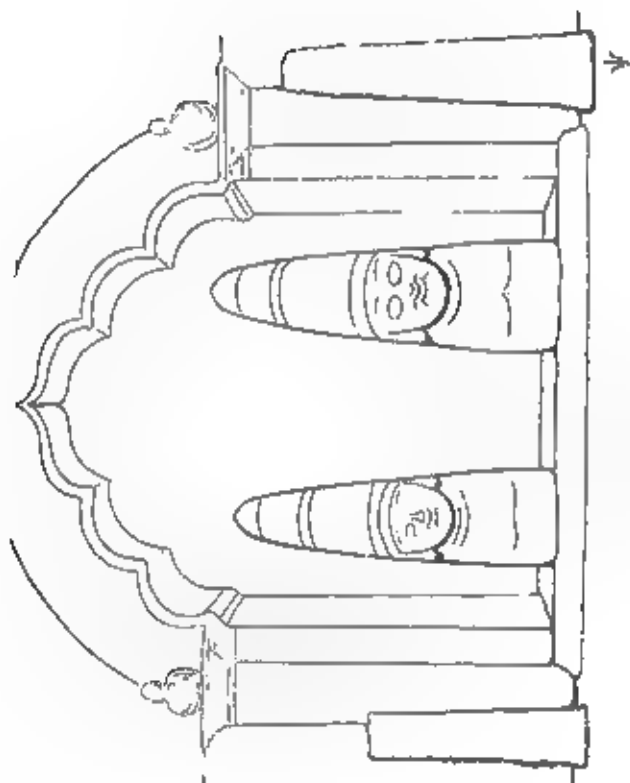
³ See p. 81.



SHRINE OF GODRAMMA



SHRINE AND IMAGES OF HISAL-MARI



THIRUVARUR SEVENTH

most of some hotel inmates and dogs and therefore they proceed to the corner of Main Street. They pass these and take the path to Ross Main street which is the bridge at Ross. Main street is a trail of each man that swings on the side and a sheep or a goat. The buffaloes are covered with tarantula, yellow powder and sometimes red powder and are also powdered with E. were and orange leaves. They remain with the fish but before the men are allowed by the corporation to swing on the fish the corporation takes the fish and gives the goat a service. The goat is taken and placed over the side of the car and the buffalo of the fish. The goat is then given over to the men and that work of the car. Then the fish proceeds to go. The men who are to swing go with the buffalo to the Humber's stream where on their side of the stream is the northern part of the city. There they swing with another fish and buffalo and one man is swinging. There are some people on each side. After swinging each light is then be taken to the fish stream. There each man is accompanied by a local man who is taken on the fish. It is at this time that the buffaloes are all killed and after another. It is attempted to kill the head of each victim with one blow. The buffalo's head is used before the buffaloes heads are covered. When this is over the men on the side get down and reach with the Humber's stream. There they offer fish after which the game returns home. The party from the Ross Main street go to the Main Main street where they remain until the night there offering prayers etc. The following morning they start home.

14. *Amoskoma Halls*. The same night the buffalo and dogs are removed by the men and placed to the open space outside the fort forming the southern wall forming the Ross Main Main street which point is prevented by the Ross Main Main street. There they put up the buffalo's heads and place the fish on the side of the fish. On these heads are placed lights and

the faces are smeared with fat turmeric, and kunkuma. The right foreleg of each animal is cut off, and stuck into the mouth. The flesh, etc., of the buffaloes is cooked and eaten by the Chakras as well as by their friends and relatives. For one week the heads are kept in the above sheds and worshipped every day. On the next Monday the Chakras and Holeyars, called also the Halagai caste, carry the heads of the two buffaloes in grand procession to their quarters and eat them up, if they are not very putrid.

A legend is prevalent regarding this Kel Mari. Hirdevathi, the eldest of the Mari sisters, is said to have ordered one of her younger sisters, Kel Mari, to bring fire. The latter went, and in her search for fire she found a lot of low caste men cooking the flesh of a buffalo and eating the same. It was a curious sight for her to see them do so. She sat there observing what was going on, and lost time. As she was late the eldest sister was very angry and excommunicated her with a curse, saying that she should only be worshipped by the lowest class of people. Hence the heads of the buffaloes are worshipped in the name of Kel Mari.

The following legend is believed by the common people. Once upon a time there lived a Rishi who had a fair daughter. A Chandala, i.e. an Outcaste, desired to marry her. He went to Kāsi (Benares) in the disguise of a Brāhman, where, under the tuition of a learned Brāhman, he became well versed in the *śāstras* (i.e. the sacred books), and learnt the Brāhman modes of life. On his return he passed himself off for a Brāhman, and after some time made offers to the Rishi lady, and somehow succeeded in prevailing upon her to marry him. She did so, her father also consenting to the match. They lived a married life for some time, and had children. One day it so happened that one of the children noticed the father stitch an old shoe previous to going out for a bath. This seemed curious, and the child drew the mother's attention to it. Then the mother, by virtue of her *tapas* (i.e. austerities),

came to know the base trick that had been played upon her by her husband, and cursed him and herself. The curse on herself was that she should be born a Mari to be worshipped on y by low-caste men. The curse on him was that he should be born a buffalo, fit to be sacrificed to her, and that her children should be born as sheep and chickens. Therefore during the periodical Mar festivals, buffaloes, sheep, and chickens are used as victims, and the right leg of the male buffalo is cut off and stuck in his mouth in memory of his having stitched the shoes in his disguise as a Brahman.

Animal sacrifices are generally offered by Vaidyas and Sudras, the victims being usually buffaloes, sheep or goats, and fowls. These sacrifices are usually propitiatory. Sometimes they are thank-offerings, but there is no exp-offering. When, owing to sickness, any one's life is endangered, or a vow to sacrifice the life of an animal on the recovery of the sick person is made and carried out by the convalescent as soon as possible after restoration to health. Should any misfortune happen to a personal enemy, an animal is at once sacrificed as a thank-offering.

In all these cases, the victim is taken before the altar and there decapitated by a stroke of a sword, the blood being sprinkled on the object before which the sacrifice is offered or on the ground in the vicinity. In no case is the blood ever sprinkled on the person offering the sacrifice. Before a building is finished or occupied, the same kind of sacrifice is made to propitiate the spirit supposed to have already entered there, and the blood of the victim is sprinkled over the materials of which the building is constructed.

Similarly when a well is sunk or a tank built, or a new tool or agricultural implement used, all of which from their nature might be the means of causing death, a sacrifice is offered to the evil spirit to prevent accidents, and, in the case of sharp-edged tools, blood is poured on that part which would cause the hurt. A partial sacrifice is made in the case of tools and implements which from their nature would not be likely to

cause death, and in these cases only a slight cut is made usually in the nose or ear of the animal sufficient to draw a few drops of blood which are smeared on the idol, as already mentioned. In cases of epidemics, blood is poured over the image of the deity supposed to be responsible for the disease.

Coorg. The relic of human sacrifice described above in Mr. Ramakrishna Rao's memorandum, would serve to show that in Mysore such sacrifices at one time, formed a regular part of the worship of the village deities, and this is confirmed by the account given in the *Mysore and Coorg Manuals* by Mr. Lewis Rice¹ of the worship of the grama devatā in Coorg which is a hill country to the west of the Mysore State inhabited by a mixed population consisting of aboriginal tribes, a hundred and twenty thousand cultivators and artisans, who were formerly serfs but are now freemen and a ruling class of Kidiyas or Coorgs who probably migrated into the country about the third century A.D. He writes:

The essential features of the religion of the Coorgs are anti-Hinduism and consist of ancestral and demon worship. As among other Dravidian mountain tribes, so also in Coorg, tradition relates that human sacrifices were offered in former times to secure the favour of their grama devatās Mariamma, Durgā, and Bhadrakālī the tutelary goddesses of the 'Sakti' line, who are supposed to protect the villages or 'Sada' from all evil influences. In K. mīadu and K. mīcher (grāmas in Katvet Nāl) once every three years, in December and June a human sacrifice used to be brought to Bhadrakālī and during the offering by the *paṇḍits* (a class of religious merchants) the people exclaimed 'Al Amma' — A man, oh mother! — but once a devotee shouted 'Al Al. Amma, Adu' — Not a man, oh mother! a goat, and since that time a he-goat without blemish

¹ Vol. III, pp. 264, 265.

² Bhadrakālī and Bhadrakāl are names of Kālī, the wife of Shiva.

³ See above, p. 20, n. 1.

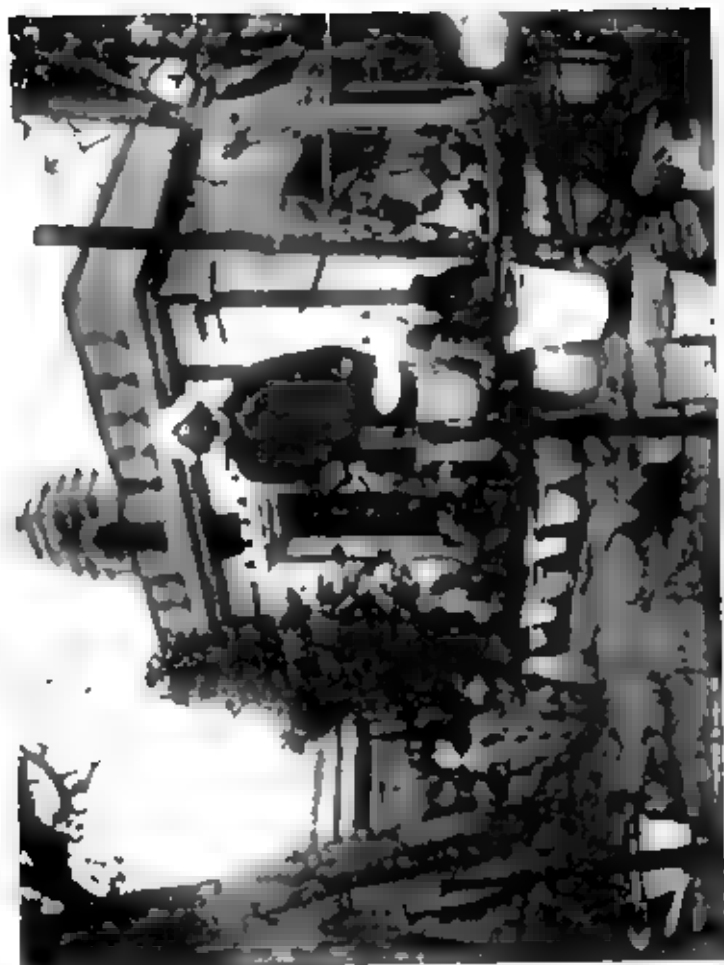
has been sacrificed. Similarly in Bellur in Tavalgeri-Murnal of Aggalod taluk, once a year, by order from each house, a man was sacrificed by cutting off his head at the temple, but when the turn came to a certain house, the devoted victim made his escape into the jungle. The *magara* after an unsuccessful search returned to the temple and said to the priest, *Kanah Adu* which has a double meaning *see Kanah next year Adu* we will give or *Adu*, a goat and then *kanah* only *magara* were offered. The devotees fast during the day. The he-goat is killed in the afternoon, the blood is sprinkled upon a stone and the flesh eaten. At night the *Panasa* dressed in red and white striped cotton cloth and her faces covered with metal black masks perform their dances and dances. In *Mangal Taluk* in *Ippey* estate and in *Kanara* in *Kanara*, the village near the *Kanara* or *ma* or *butta* instead of a man. Tied to a tree in a *ganga* grove near the temple, the head is cut by a *Mina* (a wandering tribe who are basket and mat makers) who cuts off its head with a large knife but no *magara* are present at the time. The head is placed on a stone under a tree and the flesh eaten by the *Mina*. In connection with this sacrifice there are peculiar dances performed by the *magara* around the temple, the *domata* or lion dance each man wearing the horns of a spotted deer or stag on his head, the *pisata* or peacock feather dance the performers being ornamented with peacock feathers, and the *shamata* or yak tail dance, during which the dancers keeping time swing yak tails. These ornaments belong to the temple, where they are kept.

In some cases where a particular curse which can only be removed by an extraordinary ceremony is said by the *Kanava* to rest upon a house, estate or field, the ceremony performed seems to be another relic of human sacrifice. The *Kanava* sends for some

* The *Kanava* are religious specialists said to be descendants of a *Manava* Brahmin and a low-caste woman.

of his fraternity, the Panikas or Bannas, and they set to work. A pit is dug in the middle room of the house, or in the yard or the stable, or the field, as the occasion may require. Into this one of the magicians descends. He sits down in Hindu fashion muttering mantrams. Pieces of wood are laid across the pit, and covered with earth a foot or two deep. Upon this platform a fire of jack wood is kindled, into which butter, sugar, different kinds of grain, etc., are thrown. This sacrifice continues all night the Panika sacrificer above, and his immured colleague below, repeating their incantations all the while. In the morning the pit is opened, and the man returns to the light of day. These sacrifices are called *maranada tsai*, or death stone mantras. They cost from ten to fifteen rupees. Instead of a human being, a cock is sometimes shut up in the pit and killed afterwards.

In cases of sore affliction befalling a whole Grāma or Nād (village), such as small pox, cholera, or cattle disease, the ryots combine to appease the wrath of Mariamma by collecting contributions of pigs, fowls, rice, coconuts, bread, and plantains from the different houses, and depositing them at the *Mandu*, whence they are carried in procession with tom-toms. In one basket there is some rice, and the members of each house on coming out bring a little rice in the hand, and waving it round the head, throw it into the basket, with the belief that the dreaded evil will depart with the rice. At last the offerings are put down on the Nād boundary, the animals are killed, their blood is offered on a stone, the rice and basket are left, and the rest of the provisions are consumed by the persons composing the procession. The people of adjoining Grāmas or Nāds repeat the same ceremony, and thus the epidemic is supposed to be banished from the country. In still greater calamities, a flock of sheep is driven from Nād to Nād, and at last expelled from the country."



SHRINE OF PAIKVATTAMMA, KANABEK COUNTRY

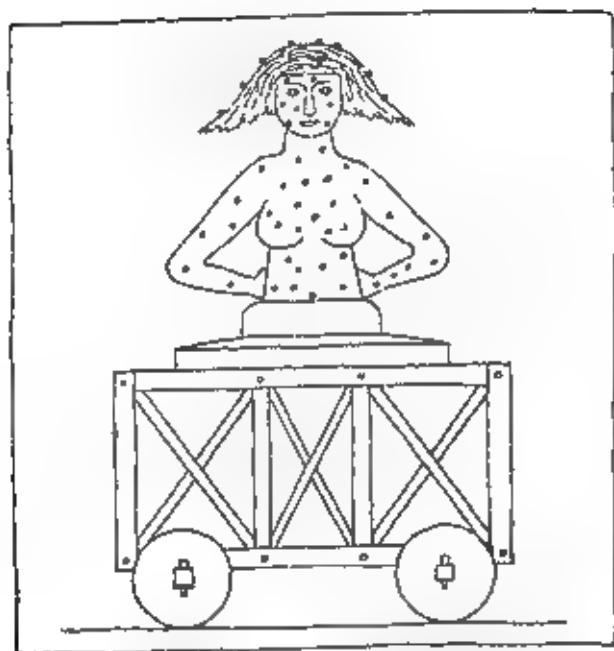
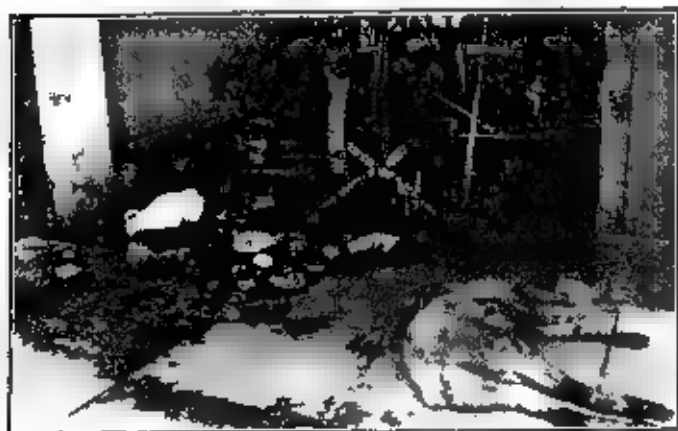


IMAGE OF GODDESS WITH NAILS DRIVEN
INTO HER BODY



BUFFALO SACRIFICED TO MOTOR BICYCLE

CHAPTER VI

MODES OF WORSHIP IN THE TAMIL COUNTRY

THE ceremonies observed in the worship of village deities in the Tamil districts of Tanjore, Trichinopoly, and Cuddalore closely resemble those prevailing in the Telugu and Canarese countries, but there are striking differences, which seem largely due to the influence of Brāhmanical ideas and forms of worship. In the first place the ceremonial washing of the images and the processions during the festivals are much more elaborate in these districts than among the Telugus and Canarese. Then, again, the male deities connected with the goddesses are much more prominent, and tend much more to assume an independent position. Iyenar is entirely independent and has a separate shrine and often a separate festival, while in many cases special sacrifices are made to the male attendants Madurai-Viran and Munadian. And then, in the third place, there is a widespread idea that animal sacrifices are distasteful to good and respectable deities, both male and female, so that no animal sacrifices are ever offered to Iyenar or to the good and kind goddesses. The ancient sacrifices of fowls, sheep, goats, and buffaloes are, indeed, still offered, but only to the male attendants Madurai-Viran and Munadian, and not the goddesses themselves, and while the animals are being killed a curtain is often drawn in front of the image of the goddess, or else the door of her shrine is shut, lest she should be shocked at the sight of the shedding of blood.

An account of the modes of worship and festivals in some typical villages will clearly show both the

resemblances to the Tehago and Casarese ones, and also the striking differences.

Vandipattam (Cuddalore District). In the district of Cuddalore at a village called Vandipattam three deities are worshipped, Mariammam, Draupati, and Iyenar, each of whom has a separate shrine. Mariammam is the largest, about twelve feet high, twenty-five feet long, and twelve or fifteen feet broad. Draupati is less imposing, being only about six feet high, ten feet long, and eight feet broad.

Iyenar stands in the open, under a tree with clay images of horses, elephants, dogs and warriors (or Virans) on either side. The Virans are supposed to keep watch over their master, while the animas serve as his *aksharam* vehicles, on which he rides in his nightly chase after evil spirits. Individual villagers, both men and women, constantly offer private sacrifices consisting of boiled rice, fruit, sugar, incense, and sometimes of fowls and sheep to the Viran of Iyenar, and then the victim is brought before the image of the Viran. Water is sprinkled over it, a wreath of flowers is put round its neck by the priest, and turmeric and kunkuma are smeared on its forehead. Then a bottle of arrack, a pot of fish, two or three chermots, some gajja (Indian hemp) and opium, and dried fish are presented to the Viran, afterwards to be consumed by the priest. Camphor is burnt between the animal and the Viran and finally the head of the victim is cut off with a large chopper by a priest specially appointed for the purpose. Nothing special is done with the blood. The carcass is taken away by the offerer, and the head belongs to the priest who cuts it off.

Once a year a public sacrifice is offered to Iyenar by the whole village, some time in April or May. On this occasion the image of Iyenar, which is made of granite and stands about one and a half feet high, is first washed with gingelly oil,* lime juice, milk and curds, with

* Gingelly is an Indian name for *Sesamum Indicum* and *Sesamum Orientale*.

coconut, plantains, sugar and some aromatic spices all mixed together.¹ Then incense and camphor and paste are put on the forehead, and a cloth laid round its waist. The villagers bring boiled rice, coconuts, plantains, betel leaves and betel nut, sweet cakes of rice flour, sugar and ghee in large quantities, and spread them all on leaves upon the ground before the image. The *puṭi* burns incense and camphor and finally the offerings are all distributed among the people present. After these offerings have been duly made, a curtain is drawn in front of the image of *Iyēnar* and sheep and fowls are sacrificed to the *Vīras*, in the same way as at private sacrifices.

Maraimman and *Irappati* have each one annual festival, which lasts for ten days but no animal sacrifices are ever offered in these festivals or on any other occasions at the shrines of these goddesses. The festival begins with hoisting the flag and then for eight days there are processions morning and evening, when a metal image of the goddess is carried in a palanquin through all the streets of the village. On the ninth day there is a car procession, when the image is put on a large car about twenty feet high and dragged round the village while on the night of the tenth day the image is put on a raft and dragged round the tank with torches, pyres, and tom-toms.² Offerings of boiled rice, fruits and flowers, incense and camphor, are made every day and especially on the ninth day, when a large crowd usually assembles.

Shiyāl Tanjore District. A large village in the Tanjore district named *Shiyāl*, where Brāhmanism is very strong, *Iyēnar*, *Pālār*, *Maraimman*, *Angamman*, and *Kaṁamman* are all worshipped with typical rites, but in this village though no animal sacrifices are offered to *Kaṁamman*, *Maraimman*, *Pālār* or *Angamman*, yet they are offered to the subordinate male deities,

¹ These offerings are copied from the great temples.

² The processions on the previous night are copied from the observation of Brāhmanical temples.

Madurai Viran and Munadian, who act as guardians of their shrines. Apparently, however, Pidāri is regarded as slightly less squeamish in the matter of bloodshed than the others, as curtains are drawn before the other three when animals are sacrificed to Madurai Viran and Munadian, but not before Pidāri. No festival is held for Kātamman, who seems to be a rather inert deity, of no great account in practical affairs.

During the festivals of Mariamman, Pidāri, and Angalamman the ablutions are particularly elaborate. The image is washed twice every day, morning and evening, with water, oil, milk, coconut milk, a solution of turmeric, rosewater, a solution of sandalwood, honey, sugar, lime, and a solution of the bark of certain trees, separately in a regular order. This ceremonial washing is called in the Tamil country *Aśahegam*,¹ and certainly deserves an imposing name. The pidāri next repeats certain mantras (sacred texts) before the image, after the example of Brahman priests, and the offerings of the people (boiled rice, fruit, flowers, cakes, sugar, etc.) are presented, in case and camphor are burnt and prostrations made to the deity. Every evening after sunset, an image of the goddess, made of a metal, on a small wooden platform decorated with tinsel and flowers, is carried in procession on the shoulders of the people round the main streets of the village, accompanied with fireworks and torches, and the inspiring sounds of the tom-tom. After the procession, camphor is burnt, a coconut broken, and the image replaced in the shrine.

On the tenth day of the festival, in the evening, animal sacrifices are offered, consisting of fowls and sheep, to Madurai Viran and Munadian. People who have made vows, in times of sickness or distress, or in order to secure some boon, bring their victims to the shrine. Water and turmeric are poured on the whole body of the animal, and some mantras are recited by

¹ *Aśahegam* the Sanskrit word for the ceremonial anointing of a king or a god.

the pūṣāri. If the animal is a sheep or goat, it is then seized by the officer and his friends, some of whom catch hold of its hind legs while others hold fast to a rope fastened round its neck and its head is cut off with one stroke of the chopper by one of the pūṣāris. The head is placed in front of the image of Madurai Vīraṇ with its right facing it its mouth. During the killing of the victim a curtain is drawn in front of Mariamman and Angalamman, but not before Pūṣāri.

At the festival of Mariamman two special ceremonies are performed, which are not performed at the other festivals in this village but are quite common elsewhere. When sheep are sacrificed, the head is cooked in earthen vessels, mixed with blood and then sprinkled in the enclosure of the shrine and in the four corners of the main streets through which the procession passes. What remains over is taken and thrown away in some field at a little distance from the village.

Then, after the animals have been sacrificed, the fire-walking ceremony takes place. A trench is dug inside the enclosure of the shrine and filled with logs of wood, which are set alight and reduced to glowing embers. In the evening the metal image¹ of Mariamman is brought out and held in front of the fire while a short pūṣā is performed by burning camphor. Then the pūṣāri walks barefooted over the red-hot embers, followed by other people, who have made vows to perform this act of devotion.

During the festival of Pūṣāri there is a car procession on the ninth day, which is always the day of the new moon, and in the evening one or three buffaloes are sacrificed to Madurai Vīraṇ or Murugan. The victim is always a male buffalo and is generally brought by some private person. Water and turmeric are first poured over it, and it is garlanded with flowers, and then its head is cut off with a single stroke of the chopper by a man of the Padavachi caste who, by the way, is not an Outcaste. The head is placed in front

¹ See p. 79 above.

² See pp. 26-27 above.

of the image but the foreleg is not cut off or put in the mouth, as is constantly done in the case of buffalo sacrifices in the Telugu country. The blood is collected in an earthen vessel and placed near the image of Pidari and left there the whole night. Next morning, the people assured me, only a small quantity of blood is found in the vessel, Pidari having drunk the greater part of it. The remains are poured away outside the compound of the shrine. The heads and carcases of the buffaloes sacrificed are all handed over to the Pariah of the village, who takes them away for a feast.

At the festival of Angalamman pigs are sacrificed to her male guardians as well as sheep, goats, and fowls, not only by the Pariah but also by any caste of Śūdras. The Iyengar festival takes place at the same time as the Pidari festival, and the same ceremonies are performed, except that no animals are sacrificed at his shrine.

The idea, so naively expressed in the Pidari festival at Shiyali that the goddess actually drinks the blood of the victims is not uncommon. In many villages some of the blood is collected in an earthen vessel and placed inside the shrine after the sacrifice. At one village, where pigs are sacrificed to Madurai Viran, though the blood is not collected in any vessel, but simply allowed to flow on the ground, the people assured me that Madurai Viran drinks it. In the same way the rice and the blood sprinkled through the streets of a village or round the boundaries, which is called *poli*, or food in Telugu, is regarded as food for the evil spirits. In many Tamil villages the rice and blood are made up into little balls and thrown up in the air, where, as the people firmly believe, they are seized by the deity to whom the sacrifice is offered, or by the evil spirits that hover round the procession.

Villars Taluk, North Arcot District. The following interesting descriptions of the invocation of Pidari and of the karagam procession are quoted from an article by F. J. Richards, Esq., I.C.S.

"After this part of the ceremony is over, the *gājari*

invokes the deity in the accompaniment of a chorus of singers who are either his retainers or who share the income with him. The invocation takes place either near the temple or at some private and spot in the direction from which the deity is generally believed to have arrived at the village. In the latter case after the *shashagam* is over the persons present move in a body to the prescribed spot and then commence the invocation. This invocation, which to the persons present is a period of some anxiety lasts from ten to thirty minutes, when all a sudden one of these present gets inspired. The meaning of the invocation is a call to the deity to come and help them in their misfortune. The inspired person then watches the goddess during the early stages of the dancing. Later on with red eyes he listens to the song of the priest and his house. He goes into a convulsion and his feet shivering one after the other then turning then saying in Tamil to one side that the *hastakam* have to move him in all directions. As he is compassed by the arms of one or more of his neighbours. He is watched very intently by all those present. The attention of the witnesses is transferred from the goddess to the inspired man. All those seated around him move away from him and a space is cleared to enable him to move freely. *Champan* is then burnt before him and the inspired man is moved either to speak or be silent or laugh or weep. The speaking and laughing are welcomed by the witnesses with delight. They then ask him to grant them permission for celebrating the festival. Generally the permission is granted when he is either speaking or laughing. But if he either weeps or be silent that is taken as an indication of the wrath of the deity and fresh songs are sung in louder tones to appease the deity. After a fairly long interval when all become anxious about their own safety and when the songs have been well nigh exhausted the inspired man is again approached with burning *champan*. This time he is generally more sympathetic. Very often he gives his unconditional consent for the celebration of the festival. But sometimes

ally after according sanction to celebrate the festival, the inspired man lifts up his hand and points at some one whose conduct towards the community might not have been acceptable to them in the previous year. With some reluctance the man pointed out seeks the forgiveness of the inspired man, and is assured of it on his promising to sacrifice a sheep or a fowl. After permission to celebrate the festival is granted, the people present proceed with the celebration.¹

Some years ago it is said, a horse grazing close by the spot where the goddess had been invoked, got terrified by the noise of the drums, etc., and after galloping round the temple thrice, stopped in front of the entrance. The villagers attributed the horse's action to the inspiration of the goddess.²

On the day of the car procession, which takes place on the second day of the festival, 'a well formed bronze image of the idol is placed in a car immediately after the usual shushhegam ceremony and the car is dragged through the several streets of a village by all the villagers. The pujari and the others who were the kappu on the first day will continue to appear in yellow garments and take active parts in the car procession. The car will generally be preceded by drums and trumpets. In front of the car, one of the villagers who has special pretensions to religious fervour carries the karagam on his head, and entertains the people by vigorous movements to and fro without allowing the karagam to fall. His dress on such occasions consists of loose drawers, which are prevented from slipping by a tape passing round his waist. Generally nowadays a sash is used to keep it in position. The abdomen of this dancer is left open to public view. A piece of square cloth about a yard in diameter protects his back. The right hand holds a long sword and the left hand either a lime or green leaves in a piece of cloth. By pretending to let slip the karagam and by maintaining it in its original place on his head

¹ *Quarterly Journal of the Mythic Society*, Jan., 1920, pp. 111-12.
² *ib.* p. 112.

he entertains the villagers. Having sipping time past he is not allowed to eat or drink anything. As the procession consisting of drums the *haragams* (sawers) and the *gaitians* in the *ar* passes through a village, *ar* *thams* are offered to the *gaitians* at all points where two streets cross. The *ar* *thams* in this *tham* are *thams* on this occasion, owing to the absence of large villages where the people are allowed to eat the sheep. As the *gaitians* pass through the main streets of a village all the *thams* *thams* are broken and *thams* is burnt. The *gaitian* is also given some pecuniary remuneration but he must be satisfied in all villages. He is however entitled to retain for his *tham* the *tham* of the *tham* presented to him for being offered to the *tham*. He generally manages to observe it into a bag basket kept by him for the purpose. The *tham* will go only through the main streets of a village, and will return to its original place of starting without stopping anywhere. The *tham* *tham* *tham* *tham* amongst the *tham* *tham* of the *tham* and the *tham* *tham* have to remain in the streets even for a night in *tham* *tham*. Hence the place of starting must be reached before sunset under any circumstances. The ceremony for the *tham* will be over when after reaching the place of starting a *tham* *tham* *tham* and the *tham* and others return home. In villages where a *tham* *tham* husband has been appointed that person is bound to sleep in the temple or near its precincts for that night also. During the night a dramatic performance at the expense of the leading *tham* of the village is given. The performance lasts generally from ten p.m. till dawn, and the drama enacted nowadays is a compromise between the rule country drama and the present day dramas.¹⁷¹

Tham *Tham* *Tham* *Tham* Another character into festival which is specially initiated and paid for by the *tham*, is held in the *Tham* *Tham* *Tham* near the village of *Tham* during the month of July or August.

¹⁷¹ *Id.*, pp. 114-15

About a mile south of the village, on the road to Madras, there is a shrine consisting of a large open enclosure about thirty feet square surrounded by a low stone wall. On the west side of the enclosure are three large images of men seated on tigers, each about eight feet high, representing Pandur Karuppanna (Pandur being the name of an ancient village) Padu Karuppanna (i.e. the New Karuppanna), and Urauthayan (he who goes round the village) and in front of them a number of small stones, black with oil, six carved roughly into the figures of men and women, and about six quite plain, some of them only about six inches high. At right angles to this row of stones, on the south side runs a small shrine with seven small female figures representing the *Aswemars*, i.e. the seven virgins, while at the north-east corner is a small separate enclosure with the figure of Madurai Viran on horseback with his two wives seated in front of him. The presiding deities of the shrine are the goddesses represented by the small stones, and not the imposing but ugly male creatures seated on tigers.

When the time for the festival has been fixed, each family of Pariahs gives about one rupee for the expenses. Then, on the first day, they perform *pūjā* (worship) in the Pariah street of the village Melakari close by the shrine. Three sets of seven brass pots, standing one above the other, are placed in one of the huts, and on the top of each set a small image made of the five metals, one image representing Padu Karuppanna, another Pandur Karuppanna, and the third a female deity, Malayay, who is the wife of Karuppanna. Boiled rice is first offered, coconuts are broken and incense burnt to the pots, and then at night there is a sword and spear dance in the compound of the hut.

On the second day the Pariahs come to the shrine, and wash the small black stones and images representing the goddesses, with oil, milk, coconut milk, lime-juice and water, put on them some new pieces of cloth, garland them with flowers, and mark them with sandal-

wood paste. Then they boil rice on the spot, and offer it to the goddesses, and afterwards bring to the shrine sheep, pigs, and fowls. Water is first poured over each sheep, and, if it shivers, it is accepted by the goddesses; if not it is rejected.¹ Then one of the Pariah pujaris cuts off the head of the acceptable victims with a sword. If the head is cut off at one blow another pujari who is supposed to be under the influence of the deity sucks out the blood from the neck of the carcass. During the night he thus sucks the blood of about a hundred sheep. After the sheep have been killed, four or five pigs are offered by a few of the Pariahs, who have made vows. The head of each pig is cut off with a chopper, and then a small quantity of blood is collected in some earthen vessels, newly brought from the potter's house, and placed inside the shrine. When all the people have left the place the pujaris mix this blood with some boiled rice and throw it about a hundred yards outside the shrine to the north-west, north-east, south-east, and south-west, and that ends the festival.

Trichinopoly. The sucking of the blood is a horrid business, but not so horrid as an annual ceremony which takes place every February or March at Trichinopoly, one of the great centres of trade and education in the Tamil country during the festival of Kaumariamman. She is regarded as the guardian against cholera and cattle plague, and epidemics generally. A very fat pujari of the Vellala caste, who holds this menial office by hereditary right, is lifted up above the vast crowd on the arms of two men, some two thousand kids are then sacrificed one after the other the blood of the first eight or ten is collected in a large silver vessel holding about a quart, and handed up to the pujari, who drinks it all. Then, as the throat of each kid is cut, the animal is handed up to him and he sucks or pretends to suck the blood out of the carcass. The belief of the people is that the blood is consumed

¹ See above, p. 88.

by the spirit of Kalumassanman in the pūjāri, and her image stands on a platform during the ceremony about fifteen yards away.

A similar idea is probably expressed by a particularly revolting method of killing sheep, which is not uncommon in Tamil villages during these festivals. One of the pūjāris, who is sometimes painted to represent a leopard, flies at the sheep like a wild beast, seizes it by the throat with his teeth, and kills it by biting through the jugular vein.

Iruṅgalar, near Trichinopoly. There is another strange ceremony which is quite common in the Tamil country connected with the propitiation of the boundary goddess, where the blood of the victim seems to be regarded as the food of malignant spirits. At Iruṅgalar a village about fourteen miles from Trichinopoly, it forms the conclusion of the festival of the local goddess Kurumbai. During the first seven days the image is duly washed, offerings of rice and fruit are made, and processions are held through the streets of the village. Then, on the eighth day, a small earthen pot called the karagam, is prepared at the shrine of the goddess. The elaborate decorations of the karagam have been already described,¹ and I need not describe them again. When it is ready some boiled rice, fruits, coconuts, and incense are first offered to it, and then the pūjāri ties on his wrist a kapa, i.e. a cord dyed with yellow turmeric, to protect him from evil spirits. A lamb is next brought and sacrificed in front of him, to give him supernatural power, and he then takes the karagam on his head, marches with it in procession through the village to the sound of tom-toms and pipes, and finally deposits it under a booth erected in the middle of the village. On the eighth ninth and tenth days the karagam is taken in procession morning and evening, and rice and fruits, camphor and incense are also offered to it.

On the tenth day, at about seven a.m., before the pro-

¹ See p. 37 above.

cereals starts a lamb is killed in front of the karagam. The throat is first cut, and then the head cut off and the blood collected in a new earthen pot filled with boiled rice. The pot is put in a frame of ropes and taken by a *pōari* to a stone about four feet high, called *elikal* (a boundary stone) planted in the ground some three hundred yards off. A crowd of villagers run after him with wild yells but no tom-toms or pipes are played. When he comes to the boundary stone he runs round it thrice and the third time throws the pot over his shoulder behind him on to another smaller stone about two feet high and some five or six feet in circumference which stands at the foot of the *elikal*. The earthen pot is dashed to pieces and the rice and blood scatter over the two stones and all around them. The *pōari* then runs quickly back to the bath where the karagam stands without looking behind him followed by the crowd in dead silence. The man who carries the pot is supposed to be possessed by Kurumbai and is in a frantic state as he runs to the boundary stone and has to be held up by some of the crowd, to prevent his falling to the ground. The pouring out of the rice and blood is regarded as a propitiation of an evil spirit residing in the boundary stone called *Elai-karuppu* and of all the evil and malignant spirits of the neighbourhood who are his attendants. When the *pōari* gets back to the bath, he prostrates himself before the karagam, and all the people do the same. Then they go to bathe in the neighbouring tank and afterwards return to the bath where another lamb is sacrificed, and the procession starts off through the village.

In the evening of the same day a pig, a sheep, and a cock are bought from the fowls of the shrine and taken to the shrine itself which stands outside the village. There they are killed in front of a stone image of Madurai Vīṇu, which stands in a separate little shrine in front of that of Kurumbai. A large quantity of rice is boiled inside the walls of the compound, and then the flesh of the three animals is cooked and made

into curry. The rice and curry are put on a cloth, spread over straw, in front of the image while the pujari does puja to Madurai Viran inside his shrine, offering attack fruit, flowers, incense, and camphor, and saying mantras. afterwards, he sprinkles some water on the curry and rice, which are then distributed to the people present. During this sacrifice to Madurai-Viran Kurumbai's shrine is closed.

Pullambadi Trichinopoly District. The ceremony of propitiating the spirit of the boundary-stone is very common in the Trichinopoly district, though there are the usual variations of local custom in performing it. At a village called Pullambadi it takes place in connexion with the festival of Kuzanthalamman, which lasts for fifteen days. (On the first day the image is washed, and a sheep is killed outside the enclosure as a sacrifice to Karuppu (a subordinate male deity) the door of the shrine of the goddess being closed. Rice, fruit, flowers, etc., are also offered to the goddess. (On the next six days only rice, fruits, etc., are offered, but on the eighth day two more sheep are sacrificed to Karuppu. From the ninth to the fifteenth day the metal image of the goddess¹ is taken in procession round the village, each day on a different *vahanam* ² on the fifteenth day it is carried on a car, and on this day three sheep are killed in front of the shrine, before the procession starts, the blood being collected in an earthen pot and mixed with boiled rice. Then a sheep is sacrificed at each of the nine corners of the streets that surround the temple, and the blood of all the sheep is put into earthen vessels by a pujari of the Shervagaru caste, called the Kappukaran, the animals being all killed by one of the Pariahs. The Kappukaran then mixes all the blood and rice together in one large earthen pot and carries it to the village, which is about half a mile away. Nine more sheep are sacrificed at nine other corners of the village itself, and their blood is again collected and mixed with the rest. When the car has come back to

¹ See pp. 36-37 above.

² See p. 86 above.

As resting place and the procession is finished, the Kappukaran takes the large vessel, full of blood and rice and followed by all the men of the village, some holding him by the arms, goes to the western boundary of the village lands where is the boundary stone called *hal* about two feet square and one and a half feet high. A lamb is then killed over the stone so that its blood flows over it and the head which has been cut off is then placed on the top of the stone. The Kappukaran runs thrice round the stone, carrying the pot full of rice and blood in a framework of ropes and, facing the stone, dashes the pot against it. Thus done he at once runs away without stopping to look back. The other villagers go away before the pot is broken. This concludes the ceremonies of the festival.

Sembu near Pudukottai. At another village, Sembu in the Pudukottai taluk,¹ the ceremonies connected with the propitiation of boundary spirits are rather more elaborate. There is a boundary stone at each of the four corners of the village site five more stones inside the village and another stone on the boundary of the village land.

During the Pulari festival boiled rice, fruits etc. are offered at all the nine boundary stones in the village. On the sixteenth day the image of Pulari is taken to the house of the pulari who is to perform the dread ceremony of propitiating the spirits that inhabit the boundary stone of the village lands. The pulari puts the kappu² on his wrist, and a goat entirely black in colour and before the image and its blood collected in an earthen pot but not mixed with rice. The metal image of Pulari is then carried in procession round the village on a wooden horse and at each of the nine stones in the village itself a lamb is sacrificed. When this procession is ended, the pulari with the kappu on his wrist takes the earthen pot with the blood of the black goat inside it, makes it inside a frame of ropes, and runs to the

¹ A taluk is a division of a civil district.

² See p. 100.

boundary stone on the extreme limit of the village land. About twenty or thirty villagers arm with him holding him by the arms, as he is out of his senses being possessed with Palari. When he arrives at the stone he runs once round, and then stands facing it and dashes the pot against it. Without a moment's delay and without looking behind him, he runs back to the place where Palari is seated on the wooden horse on which she was carried round the village. The image is taken back to the shrine and the ceremony is at an end.

An untoward event happened a few years ago in connexion with one of these Palari festivals at a village in the Trichinopoly district. The festival had commenced and the palari had tied the kapa on his wrist, when a dispute arose between the trustees of the shrine which caused the festival to be stopped. The dispute could not be settled, and the festival was suspended for three years and during all that time there could be no marriages among the Ulaya caste while the poor palari with the kapa on his wrist had to remain the while of the three years in the temple, not daring to go out lest Palari in her wrath should slay him.

Tunnapalam, Tanjore District. At a village in the Tanjore district, called Tunnapalam, the boundary spirits are propitiated during the Kalamman festival by the sacrifice of a buffalo. On the last day of the festival, the image of Kalamman, who in many parts of the Tanjore district is specially the goddess of the boundary, is taken to the boundary stone and then one male buffalo is killed beside the stone and buried in a pit close by, but nothing is done either with the head or the blood.

Mahakalkudi, near Trichinopoly. The worship of the village deity at a village called Mahakalkudi, about eight miles from Trichinopoly presents several rather curious features. The chief deity is a goddess called Mahakali¹ or Mahakali². In her shrine are four subordinate female deities, Eliamman, Pulathel-

¹ Great Kālī

emman, Vuhakshmanemman, and Angalamman, and then an elaborate name doctra, Mathura, Vira, Rathalam, and Iyengar (It is the only place where I have come across Iyengar as a subordinate deity). In this temple I (in brackets) is worshipped by all classes including the Brahmans and with some of the puariis are Sautras, the others are Brahmans. An old Man of the district told me that he could remember the time when all the puariis were Sautras. The Brahmans appear to have secured a footing in the shrine about fifty years ago. The yearly festival is held in February or March and lasts sixteen days.

On the first day named Kankannatharamam is the wearing of the bracelet. *Kankannam* is a gold bangle or bracelet prepared for the occasion by the temple authorities and put on the wrist of the image which is made of the five metals in the form of a woman and stands about three feet high. This must be done at an auspicious hour either of the day or night. One of the Sautra puariis at the same time puts a kapa on his own right wrist. Hired rice cookers, plantains and limes are afterwards offered to the goddess. Lights are placed all over the shrine and incense and camphor are burnt. For eight days the same ceremonies are repeated, the same bangle put on the wrist of the image and the same kapa on the wrist of the puari.

On the ninth day this bangle is removed and put in the treasury of the shrine, and a new one put on. The same offerings are made as on the other days, but on this day for the first time, the image is taken out and carried in procession on a small wooden platform, adorned with tinsel, through the village with music and tom-toms, torches and fireworks.

These ceremonies are then repeated till the end of the festival, but each day in the fourteenth, the image is carried on a different vehicle or *vehnam* on the tenth day on a wooden horse on the eleventh on a car, on the twelfth on a wooden lion, on the thirteenth on a palanquin on the fourteenth on a swan or bull. No animal sacrifices are performed during the festival of

the shrine itself: but on the eleventh day many sheep and goats are sacrificed in connexion with the car procession. Just after the image is put on the car, a kid is brought in front of it and decapitated by a village watchman, or *kavalgar*, of the Umbellayar caste. The *kavalgar* takes up the head and carcass and carries them round the car, letting the blood drip upon the ground, and then gives both to a Pariah servant of the shrine. When the car returns, a sheep is sacrificed in front of it. Its head is cut off by the *kavalgar*, and its head and body are allowed to lie upon the ground, while fruits, coconuts, and camphor are offered. The man who provides the sheep ultimately takes the body and the *pujari* the head. While the car is being dragged through the streets, people who have made vows bring sheep to the doors of their houses, and the *kavalgar* comes with his heavy chopper and cuts off their heads.

Kannanur, near Trichinopoly. At the neighbouring village of Kannanur there is a curious local variation in the ordinary rite of sacrifice. During the festival of Mariamman many people who have made vows bring sheep, goats, fowls, pigeons, parrots, cows, and calves to the temple, and leave them in the compound alive. At the end of the festival these animals are all sold to a contractor. Two years ago they fetched Rs. 400, a good haul for the temple, which is particularly a large one, covering two acres of ground enclosed by a high wall.

Buffalo sacrifices are not as common in the Tamil as in the Telugu country, but they are offered in many villages, especially in connexion with the worship of Madura-Kāliāmmān.

Turayur, near Trichinopoly. At a village called Turayur, near Trichinopoly, a buffalo sacrifice is offered once in five or six years. Before the day of the festival is fixed, the chief men of the village go to the shrine, offer rice and fruits, etc., and ask the goddess whether they may perform the festival. If a lizard utters a chirp in a part of the temple fixed on beforehand, it is

taken as a sign that permission is given, and the festival is arranged. The buffaloes selected for sacrifice are generally chosen some time beforehand by people who make vows in sickness or trouble, and then allowed to roam about the village at will. When they become troublesome, the people go and ask permission of the deity to hold a sacrifice. The buffaloes are brought to the shrine on the appointed day and killed by a man of the Kallar caste, who cuts off the heads with a chopper. Nothing is done with the blood, but both head and carcass are thrown into a pit close by the shrine as soon as the animal is dead. The same pit is used at each festival but it is cleared out for each occasion. When all the carcases have been put in, incense and camphor are burnt in cauldrons and if it is offered on the edge of the pit, another earth is thrown in, and the carcases are covered up. This takes place outside the temple wall, and during the sacrifice a curtain is drawn before the shrine where the immovable stone image of the goddess is located, but on the other hand, the mobile image used in processions, is taken out before the sacrifice begins, carried on a wooden lion and placed on four stone pillars specially erected for the purpose outside the temple about four or five yards from the place where the buffaloes are killed. No curtain is drawn before this image, the sacrifice is performed in full view of the goddess. It is a curious little compromise between ancient custom and Brahman prejudice.

Another village. At another village I found that Brahman ideas had taken one step further in the worship of Madure Kalliamman, as no animal sacrifices of any kind are offered there to the goddess herself but only to Periyanna-avami, a male deity residing on the top of a hill some three miles away from her shrine, and even there the pujaris lamented that, owing to the degeneracy of the age, offerings now take away both head and carcass for their own use instead of leaving the head, as was done in better days, to be the perquisite of the pujaris. At one village I was told

that there used to be buffalo sacrifices some twenty years ago but the people did not know to what deity they were offered, and none are ever offered now.

Pulambadi Trichinopoly District. At Pulambadi, a village of some size in the Trichinopoly district, I was told that Madurai Kālī only accepts *Vedic* orthodox sacrifices. All animal sacrifices, therefore, are made to Madurai Viran or Karuppu her male guardians and a urtain is drawn before Madurai Kālī while they are being offered. The pōṭṭi in this village collects the blood of the animals in an earthen pot, mixes it with rice and makes it up into little balls. Then, possessed by Karuppu or Madurai Viran, he takes the pot and runs round the temple enclosure and at each corner throws up a ball of rice and blood, which is carried off by Karuppu or Madurai Viran (so the people firmly believe) and never falls down. The Muzai¹ who was quite a well-educated man, assured me that this was a fact, and that he had seen it with his own eyes—only as he admitted, the ceremony takes place in the dark!

Vallam Tanjore District. Buffaloes are offered in some villages of the Tanjore district both to Kāliammā and Pōṭṭi. Where the sacrifice is strictly performed, as at Vallam, the pōṭṭi who is a Śūdra, lives only on milk and fruit, and eats only once a day for a whole month beforehand, and on the day of the sacrifice puts the kapu² on his right wrist but he takes hold of the sacrificial sword. It is supposed that he is first inspired by the deity before he can kill the victim. He cuts off the head sometimes in one blow and sometimes in two or three. Nothing is done with the blood, and both head and carcase are buried in a pit near the shrine. The dung of the victim is mixed with water and poured over the image of the deity. In some villages in the Tamil country it is customary to take the entrails of the victim and hang them round the pōṭṭi's neck and put

¹ This word literally means consistent with the Vedas.

² See p. 100.

the liver in his mouth during the procession,¹ when the rice and head is sprinkled through the village and sometimes part of the entrails is cooked with rice and presented before the image. At one village I found that after this procession has gone round the houses, it passes on to the burning ghat,² where the entrails are taken from the pig's neck and the liver from his mouth and both are laid down with some curry and rice which is afterwards eaten by a few of the low-caste people. These extremely repulsive processions, however are not as in the Telugu country, especially connected with buffalo sacrifices.

Another usage. An uncleaning custom prevails in one village that I came across which is considerably worse than cooking a dead man's mother's milk. When a pig is sacrificed to Angakamman, its neck is first cut slightly at the top and the head allowed to flow on to some heated rice placed on a plantain leaf and then the rice soaked in its own blood is given to the pig to eat. If the pig eats it the owner is guided. If not, the owner is foul. But many times the pig has its head cut off by a *Sakti* priest. In some villages the head of the pig, offered to Angakamman, is mixed with heated rice, taken to the burning ghat where the dead bodies are burned and thrown at the end of night as an offering to the spirits that hover round the place.

Pudukottai sub division Trichinopoly District. Among other curious applications of the blood of animals, not the least interesting and significant is the one that prevails in nearly all the villages of the Pudukottai taluk of the Trichinopoly district, where it is the custom for all the villagers to dip *idols* in the blood of animals slain simply for food and hang them up on the eaves of their houses to protect the cattle against disease. This is probably a relic of an age when the eating of animal food under any circumstances had a religious significance.

¹ See above p. 112 and below p. 140.

² The place where the dead are burned.

Pullambadi, Trichinopoly District It is refreshing to turn to a custom connected with the worship of village deities which can make some pretence to practical utility. In the village of Pullambadi at the shrine of Kulanthalamman, whose festival has already been described¹ an interesting custom prevails, which seems to be not uncommon in those parts. When a creditor cannot recover a debt he writes out a statement of his claim against his debtor on dried palmyra leaves, presents it to the goddess, and hangs it up on a spear before her image. If the claim is just and the debtor does not pay it is believed that he will be afflicted with sickness and terrifying dreams, and that in his dreams the goddess will warn him to pay the debt at once. If, however, he disputes the claim, then he in turn writes out his statement of the case and hangs it up on the same spear. The deity then decides which statement is true and afflicts the perjuror with dreams and misfortunes till the false statement is withdrawn. When the claim is acknowledged, the debtor brings the money to the pujari who places it before the goddess, and then sends for the creditor and informs him that the debt is paid. As the money thus paid into the temple offers is handed over to the various creditors during the festival in April or May after deducting the amount due to the temple treasury. This is certainly a simple method of doing justice in the matter of debts, and probably just as effective as the more elaborate and more expensive processes of our courts of law. I was told that about ten creditors come to the temple every year and that the temple had made about Rs. 3,000 as its commission on the debts collected during the last thirty years. Before that time the people came and stated their claims to the goddess orally promising to give her a share if the debts were recovered but some thirty years ago the system of written statements was introduced, which, evidently, has proved far more effectual in the settlement of just

¹ See above, p. 126.

claims and much more profitable to the temple. To the practical British mind this seems the one really sensible ceremony connected with the worship of the village deities in South India.

CHAPTER VII

FOLKLORE OF THE VILLAGE GODS OF SOUTH INDIA¹

A few specimens of the folklore connected with the village deities will serve to throw some light on the religious ideas of the people, the antiquity of the village deities themselves, the struggles that have taken place in former years between the worship of these primitive goddesses and the more modern cults of Śiva and Viṣṇu, and the efforts made in the later times to connect the ruder village deities with the more dignified gods and goddesses worshipped by the Brāhmana.

Many of the stories are wild and fantastic, marked by a thoroughly Indian extravagance and exaggeration, some seem to be faint echoes of actual events in the past; and many of the details were evidently invented to account for pieces of ritual, the meaning of which had been forgotten. Here is one which probably preserves the traditional story of some palace tragedy and the conversion of the victim into a local deity and also the memory of some attempt made to put down a primitive form of worship.

Mīnāchiamman of Madura. In Madura during the time of the Pandya dynasty, there was a wicked irreligious king called Pandian. In his pride and presumption he closed the temple of Mīnāchiamman,² the renowned local goddess. She was enraged at this,

¹ The story of Ammaṇaru in this chapter is reprinted from an article in the *Nineteenth Century* by kind permission of the Editor.

² Sanskrit, Mīnākṣī, fish-eyed, an epithet of the wife of Śiva, probably meaning with love-filled eyes.

and, in order to take vengeance, became incarnate as a new demoniac. King Pandian, who greatly desired to have a husband, one day found the deity incarnate as a little girl, lying in the palace with a very curious bracelet on her arm, which was the exact copy of one belonging to his wife. He wished to adopt the child, but the astrologers warned him that she would bring evil upon his house, so he had her put in a basket and cast into the river. A merchant picked the basket up, brought her up as his own daughter and called her Kannabai. Shortly before this, it happened that the god Śiva again became incarnate as another merchant living at Kaveripattinam, a village at the mouth of the river Kaveri. Hearing of the girl's extraordinary origin, he went and married her. After some years he became very poor and in spite of his wife's remonstrances took her strange husband to Madura to sell it. It happened that King Pandian's wife had lost her bracelet, which suddenly reappeared this day a few days before this. So the merchant was arrested on the charge of stealing it, brought before the king and put to death. In a few days his wife Kannabai went to Madura, heard what had happened to the form of Thurga, the demon-killing goddess, and now Pandian knew then she has been worshipped by the people. The slaughter of Pandian created in her a desire for bloodshed and she is now a deity whom it is thought prudent to propitiate.

Madurai Vira. The following story is current about Madurai Vira in the folklore of South India. He was a minister in the service of the Naick King of Madura, some centuries ago. The daughter of the king fell in love with him. So Madurai Vira gave up his position and all his prospects of promotion and went off with the king's daughter. After their death both Madurai Vira and the king's daughter were deified and worshipped. Madurai Vira is now known as Patrai

* [Thurga, one of the names of Kālī, the wife of Śiva, who got this name because she killed a rascal demon named Durga.]

temple Karuppan, or the guard of the eighteen steps, because in the courtyard of the Ashagunnam temple, which is one of the richest shrines in all India, there is a flight of eighteen steps nine of which lead up to a platform on one side while nine lead down from it on the other. On the platform is a huge image of Karuppan, twenty feet high with enormous eyes as big as umbrellas. The image is covered with spears, guns and arms which people who have made vows come and offer to Karuppan. The room where the treasures of the temple are kept is locked up every night and the key instead of being taken away is placed on the platform in front of the image. It seems an invitation to burglars but nobody would ever dare to take the treasure which is guarded by Karuppan. It is said in the folklore of the country that some centuries ago eighteen Mayavis, or magicians, so called from the illusion, word, which they put on the minds of people came to the shrine of Ashagun with the intention of carrying away the essence of the sanctity of the shrine and transporting it elsewhere. Their idea was to carry away the spiritual essence of the god in a wooden cylinder. The god Ashagun the benevolent one became aware of the plot to carry away his essence and so he entered into the body of a small boy and by his mouth informed the king of the intended outrage and asked him to prevent it. He also told the king that the Mayavis would render themselves invulnerable by a black paste which they put on their foreheads. (This paste is generally made by a distillation of the head of a first born child that has died, with some other ingredients. If therefore a first born child dies, people generally bury it carefully in the backyard of their houses to prevent the head being taken away by magicians for this purpose.) The king consulted Ramana, a who was his family priest, and Ramana advised him to shut the doors of the temple and then pour boiling rice water at the courtyard so that the steam arising from it might melt the paste. This was done and the Mayavis, becoming vulnerable were

arrested by the king's soldiers and put to death, and each one was buried under one of the eighteen steps leading up to the platform on which the image of Karuppan stands as a solemn warning to all liars and thieves. (vii) suits in the Madura district are constantly brought to the temple to be settled by reference to Karuppan. If a man will swear in the presence of the mage that his claim is a just one, the claim is admitted to be true, as it is supposed that no one would dare to swear falsely before Karuppan.

One of the many stories current about Mariamma, the goddess of small pox is as follows.—One of the nine great Rishi in the olden days, named Pirubu, had a wife named Nagavalli equally famed for her beauty and her virtue. One day, when the Rishi was away from home the Trimurti¹ came to visit her to see whether she was as beautiful and virtuous as reported. Not knowing who they were and resenting their intrusion, she had them changed into little children. They naturally took offence and cursed her, so that her beauty faded away and her face became dotted with marks like those of the strappas. When Pirubu returned and found her thus disfigured he drove her away and declared that she should be born a demon in the next world, and cause the spread of a disease which would make people like herse!² In memory of the change which Pirubu found in her she was called Mari, i.e. changed, in the next birth. When she was put away it is said that a washerwoman took care of her, and that in consequence she was also called Uppai (a washerman's oven). I may remark that a totally different derivation of the word Mari was given me in Mysore.³

Another story about the origin of Mariamma is that she was the wife of the Tamil poet Tiruvalluvar who was a Pariah, that she got small pox and went from house to house begging for food and fanning herself with mango leaves to keep off the fume from her sores.

¹ See p. 26, note.

² See above, p. 26.

When she recovered, the people worshipped her as the goddess of small pox and hung up-mergoes leaves over their doors to keep the small pox away.

Quite a different story about Mariamma was given me by an Indian Christian, who was told it by his Hindu father. According to this legend, Mariamma was the mother of Parasurama, one of the incarnations of Vishnu, and wife of Jamadagni, a famous Rishi (Vedic seer). She was so chaste in mind that she could carry water in a mass without any vessel, and her wet cloth would fly up into the air and remain there till it was dry. One day as she was coming home from bathing, some of the Gandharvas, or heavenly singers, flew over her, and she saw their reflection in the ball of water in her hand. She could not help admiring their beauty and, through this slight lapse from the perfect ideal of chastity she lost her power, the water flowed down to the ground and her cloth fell from the sky. So she arrived home with no water and with a wet cloth. The Rishi questioned her as to the meaning of this and she confessed her fault. Her stern husband ordered her son Parasurama to take her into the wilderness and cut off her head. So the son took his mother away but when they came to the appointed place Mariamma met a Pariah woman, and as her longing for sympathy embraced her in her arms, so Parasurama cut off both their heads together and went back in great sorrow. His father promised him any reward he chose to ask in return for his obedience so Parasurama asked that his mother might be restored to life. The father granted his request and gave him some water in a vessel and a cane, telling him to put his mother's head on her body, sprinkle the water on her and tap her with the cane. In his eager haste he put his mother's head on the body of the Pariah woman and ever weeped, and restored them both to life. The woman with the Brahman head and Pariah body was afterwards worshipped as Mariamma while the woman with the Pariah head and Brahman body was worshipped as the goddess Yellamma. To Yellamma

buffaloes are sacrificed but to Mariamma goats and cows but not buffaloes.

The story is an interesting one because it probably describes the fusion of the Aryan and Dravidian cults in the days when the Aryans first found their way into South India. A Pariah body with a Brahman head is an apt description of the cult of Śiva, while a Pariah head with a Brahman body might well describe some of the cults of the ancient Dravidian deities modified by Brahman ideas and influences. The fact that the deity to whom the buffalo is offered was the one with the Pariah head shows that the buffalo sacrifice was especially characteristic of the old Dravidian religion, and suggests that the buffalo was the totem of the Pariahs.

The Buffalo Sacrifice. Another quaint story that is found all over the Telugu country in various forms, attempts to account for the prominent part taken by the Pariahs in the worship offered to the village deities, and also to explain some strange features in the ritual. In ancient days the story runs there lived a *Savarnam*, i.e. a village accountant in a village to the east. He was blind and had only one daughter. A Pariah, well versed in the Vedas, came to the village in the disguise of a Brahman. The elders of the village were deceived and induced the blind karpam to give his daughter to him in marriage, that he might succeed to the office of karpam in due time. The marriage was celebrated by Brahman rites, and the karpam's daughter bore sons and daughters to her Pariah husband, without any suspicion arising in her mind as to his origin. After a time a native of the Pariah's own village came to the place where they were living, and recognised the Pariah disguised as a Brahman. Seeing however that he was a man of influence, he said nothing to the villagers, but went and told the Pariah's old mother. As he was her only son, the old woman set out in search of him, and came to the village where he lived, and sat down by the wall used by caste people. The Pariah happened to go there, and recognised his mother, so he took her to a

barber, had her head shaved, passed her off as a Brāhman widow and brought her to his house telling his wife that she was his mother and was dumb. He took the precaution strictly to enforce her not to speak lest her speech should betray them. One day the wife ordered a meal with a dish called Savighai (wheat flour baked with sugar and made into long strings) as a mark of respect to her mother-in-law. During the meal the mother, forgetting the injunction of silence, asked her son what the Savighai was saying it looked like the entrails of an animal. The wife overheard the remark, and her suspicions were aroused by the fact that her mother-in-law could speak when her husband had said that she was dumb, and did not know a common Brāhman dish like Savighai; so she watched their conduct, and felt convinced that they belonged to a low caste and were not Brāhmans at all. Accordingly she sent their children to school one day when her husband was away from home managed to get rid of the mother-in-law for a few hours, and then set fire to the house and burnt herself alive. By virtue of her great merit in thus expiating the sin she had involuntarily committed, she reappeared in the middle of the village in a divine form declared that the villagers had done her great wrong by marrying her to a Pariah and that she would ruin them all. The villagers implored mercy in abject terror. She was appeased by their entreaties, consented to remain in the village as their village goddess, and commanded the villagers to worship her. When she was about to be burnt in the fire, she vowed that her husband should be brought before her and beheaded, that one of his legs should be cut off and put in his mouth, the fat of his stomach put on his head, and a lighted lamp placed on the top of it. (These are details of the buffalo sacrifice which has been already described, and this part of the story was evidently composed to explain the ritual, of which the true meaning had long been forgotten.) The villagers therefore seized the husband, stripped him naked, took him in procession round the village beheaded him in

her presence and treated his leg and the fat of his stomach as divested. Then her children came on the scene, vehemently blamed the villagers and village officers, and told them that they were the cause of their mother's death. The party looked at her children with interest, and declared that they should always be her children, and that without them no watch should be offered to her. The Aashis' claim to be descendants of these children, and during the festivals receive the hereditary privilege of abusing the villagers and village officers in their songs. After being beheaded the husband was born again as a buffalo, and for this reason a buffalo is offered in sacrifice to frame the village goddess.

*A Tragic Tale.*¹ Such ceremonies as the buffalo-sacrifice grow more as they seem when witnessed in broad daylight with the accompaniments of devil-music, beating and shouting or rather shrieking are much more awe-inspiring when seen at night and especially to impress a stranger in an unpleasant manner as the following will show. A — was a stranger to the country and its ways. He was returning home late one night, guided along his path by the uncertain rays of a young moon. Missing his way he strayed towards the shrine of the village goddess and when passing the low walls of the temple his attention was suddenly attracted by a heart-rending moan, seemingly uttered by some one in great distress, made the veiled creature impelled by thoughts of rendering help to a fellow creature in distress. A — approached the temple wall and looking over it saw the prostrate form of a young and handsome female of the better class of Hindustani, lying motionless as death on the stone pavement. Thoughts of dark intrigues and mysterious murders of a decidedly Eastern type impelled him to climb over the wall, and he was bending over the woman, his hand stretched out in the act of raising up what he believed was the hidden remains of the victim of some ghastly

¹ See above, p. 44.

² This story appeared in the *Madras Mail*.

in a loud and threatening voice if the paper (devil) had left her. Receiving no reply he flourished his sword over the prostrate form, uttered some incantation, and struck the woman with the magic leaves in his hand. He then bade her rise and stand before the idol, which stood in a suppliant's attitude with head bent and hands crossed while he proceeded to offer up prayers to the goddess to aid him in driving away the sinister influence after which he bade the woman make her offerings and depart in peace. The woman left the temple staggering as exhausted had she become under the mental strain to which she had been subjected in the course of the ceremony. A had seen Hindu superstitions in a. is naiveness and the effort of it had been heightened by every circumstance that could make it more impressive. The earlier shadows of night the dim flickering of the temple light that threw a ray like a sinister stamp the scene seemed when broken by the woman's motion as he put to express him deeply.

Frequently while watching at the shrine it happens that one of the more spiritual of the worshippers becomes possessed of the goddess and sometimes to excite the mind, lend dance with distorted eyes, distorted nostrils and a frame suddenly endued with extraordinary activity and strength proud to act as the mouthpiece of the goddess and to give out her oracles. It not seldom happens also that superstitious characters take advantage of this favoring by the deity to impose on the ignorant masses by pretending on their credulity. An example of the way in which the deity of an aboriginal family might become a deity of a conquering race and acquire a widespread popularity is seen in the history of Kanyama in the Chinthee district. The story goes that at a very remote date when the tract now occupied by the town of Chinthee was forest land, inhabited by aboriginal tribes known as Malabar, the dwellers in the mountain a certain man named Kanyan who was of some repute among the aborigines, dwelt there and worshipped a goddess who was called after his name Kanyama. The name was gradually

changed first into Kuvattamma and then into Kuvattamma. After some years she became the village deity of the village and a temple was built in her honour with a stone image of the goddess in front of it. In the course of time a Hindu king named Matla Raja happened to go there on a hunting expedition, and finding the spot very fertile reclaimed the country with his own soldiers. Gradually a flourishing town grew up and Kuvattamma was adopted as one of the deities of the town. Centuries afterwards Iyer Varan the Tiger of Mysore when he passed by the town being one of his marches to see how the place had blossomed the temple. The deity of protection grew and reared the fame of the goddess. The boat which had been broken off the image was brought back to the town and was brought back and in a few years the goddess became very popular over the whole district. Her story to divine human events upon the legend that she killed a certain demon who was devastating the land and took the form of a husband when he attacked her. She is regarded as a benevolent being who does not inflict diseases but is regarded as doing much good to the people whose duty is secured. She is worshipped only as a deity. This word is the English form of the Tamil Koyamputhur.

Some of the legends here witness to the bitter conflict between the original inhabitants of the land, generally known as *Chakkas* or *Kakkas* (known as *Kakkas*) and the superior race which conquered them whether *Tamils* or *Aryans*.

The legend of *Kuvattamma* the goddess of the weaver and in the *Kuvattamma* district is a case in point. It runs as follows: "There was a time when there was war between the men and the *Kakkas*. The men who were getting defeated, applied for help to the god *Shiva* who sent his wife *Parvati* to an evildoer or *murderer*, and the world to

It is here that some of the *Parvati* is the goddess of the weaver and the *Shiva* is the god of the mountain.

help them. The avatāra enabled them to defeat the Rākṣasas and as the weaver caste were in the forefront of the battle she became the goddess of the weavers and was known in consequence as Śaradāmbā, a corruption of Śeḷar Amma, Śeḷar or (Śeḷar being another title for the weavers). It is said that her original home was in the north of India near the Himalayas.

Another deity, whose worship is confined to a particular caste in South India and about whom a similar legend is told is Kammā Paramēsvarī (i.e. supreme goddess) the goddess of the Kōmmā, or traders. The story goes that in ancient days there was bitter hatred between the Kōmmās who claim to belong to the Vaiśya caste and the Mlecchas* or barbarians. When the Kōmmās were getting wearied in the struggle for supremacy they requested Pārvatī, the wife of Śiva, to come and deliver them. It so happened that about that time Pārvatī was incarnate as a girl of the Kōmmā caste who was exceedingly beautiful. The Mlecchas demanded that she should be given in marriage to one of their own people, and the refusal of the Kōmmās led to severe fighting in which the Kōmmās, owing to the presence of the avatāra of Śiva among them were completely victorious and almost exterminated their enemies. After their victory the Kōmmās entertained doubts as to the chastity of the girl and compelled her to purify herself by passing through fire. This she did and disappeared in the fire, resuming her real shape as Pārvatī, and taking her place beside Śiva in heaven. Her last words were a command to the Kōmmās to worship her, if they wished their caste to prosper.

It will be noticed from these stories that there has been a strong tendency in the Tamil country where Brāhman influence is strong to connect the old village deities with the Hindu pantheon, and especially with the god Śiva, the most popular deity in South India. No,

* See p. 20 c.

in the Tanjore district the chief goddesses of the large tribe of village deities are seven sisters who are regarded as descending from Parvati—the wife of Shiva.

Arrangements for suicide. In the Warangal taluk of the Hyderabad State there are numerous tales of men with figures of a man in the act of cutting his throat carved on them in bas-relief. The story goes that in some villages a king of Warangal persecuted some Washers (Kumbhars) a sort of guild for digging a large tank. When they appeared before him for payment he offered them no pay instead, and they went away very sad and angry and came back again a few days afterwards and cut their throats in the presence of the king so that their spirits might haunt and torment him for the rest of his life. They have been much feared from that day to this and are among the most popular gods of the district. It was a traditional method of taking revenge, and I have often heard of similar acts of retribution even in modern times.

Religiousness of the Badagas. The following stories current among the Badagas on the Nilgiri Hills in South India may possibly preserve in a perverted form the memory of some Hindu incidents which the emperor's army of the 16th century turned into legends and myths. The village of Katteri is about ten miles from Chikmagalur, and the Katteri folk have been utilized to generate the electric power that now works the Government textile factory in the broad valley on the other side of the hills. But long before currents or electric power were thought of when the Mohammedans used a Mysore man of the villagers of Katteri went down to the palace to pay tribute. When he went to a river to perform his washing in a stream the emblem of the god Ganga he found on the river bank a woman in the form of a snake. He put it in his pocket, intending to give it to his daughter as a toy. But when he got home he forgot all about the snake, and it remained in his pocket till he went down to another river near

Katari to perform *piñ* again. As he came to the bank, he touched his pocket and there found the stone. He took it out, put it down on the bank and went to do his *piñ*. When he came back it was gone! This greatly astonished him. But when he returned to the river next morning to and behold! he saw on the bank the stone turned into a real person! Then the *on* went off to a neighbouring village, Nachabetty and there fought with another *on*. The owner of this other *on* killed the aggressor, but so soon as he done so, then he turned upside down, and stood on his head with his hands in the air unable to move. The villagers were filled with astonishment, as was, they might be at this extraordinary conduct, but the man who had found the stone told them that the slaughtered *on* was really a god which he had brought up from the ponds, without knowing what it was to give to his children. The villagers were in great alarm at this, but when the man returned to his hut there was the stone figure of the *on*, with one of its horns broken and a spear wound on its left side. The village priest was hastily sent for and he declared that a daily offering of milk must be made to the stone figure. For some time this was done, then the owner neglected the *piñ* and the *on* promptly turned back into a live *on*, which attacked the village and would not let any one enter the shed where it stood. The villagers, however, made a hole in the roof and poured milk upon it from above and once more it turned into stone and stands there in the same shed to this day. Warned by the experience of the past the villagers were careful to make the daily offering of milk, but it should once more turn into a troublesome *on*. The name of the god is *Hasavakas*.*

The story reads like a description of a scene from a pantomime, when the harlequin appears on the stage. But it is a true truth to the *Madage* of Katari and the neighbouring villages. It was told to me by the only

* *Hasava* (Sanskrit *hasabha*) stands for bull or ox in the South Indian languages.

Bedaga who at that time had matriculated at the Madras University

Marriage of the Bedagas. Another story current among the Bedagas is equally trivial and is a sample of many local traditions that are current among them. A cow the story runs, had a calf. She would give no milk however for her master but ran off to a shrine (forest) close by his house. He followed her one day, and watched to see why she went there and saw her go to a stone image and pour over it the milk from her udders. He then went and fetched a spade and tried to dig the image up but could not reach the bottom of it and whenever the spade touched the stone it drew blood. He went and told the story in the village, so the villagers built a shrine over the image, and worshipped it as the god Mahalinga.¹

Hathas of Paranganad. The tradition of the goddess Hathas is a grandmother probably preserves the memory of a real event as the worship of men or women who have died violent deaths or in a tragic way is common all over South India. About a hundred years ago, a man had a daughter whom he wished to marry to a man in the Paranganad division of the Nizams. The girl refused and the father insisted. So at last she went to the village tank (a large pond) sat under a tree first bathed and then threw herself into the water and was drowned. One of the men in the Paranganad division afterwards saw the woman in a dream, and she told him that she was not a human being but a goddess, an incarnation of Parvati the wife of Siva.

This story illustrates the origin of many deities in India, and also the way in which these local goddesses are tacked on to the religion of the Brahmans by being made wives or incarnations of the wife of Siva.

Apparitions at Adichanallur. During one of my tours on the East Coast north of Madras I got a copy of a manuscript on palm leaves belonging to a village priest.

¹ The Queen Bedaga, the legend being Siva's phantom system.

which contains the story of the village goddess Ammevatu, now worshipped as Anbemma. The story is recited by the Avaris during the annual festival. It is a strange tale, telling how, if we may believe describing the birth of the new religions Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, and the struggle that ensued between the two religions. It is not impossible that it describes an attempt on the part of the Brahmans to suppress the worship of the village deity by the new cults and the revival of the primitive religion through some episodes or other disasters. A bad epidemic of small-pox or cholera, just at the time when the newer faiths were being introduced, the old deities to be neglected would be quite sufficient to revive their popularity and give rise to a fantastic myth describing the event. The myth begins by localizing the extreme antiquity of Ammevatu. 'Even before the existence of the first Yugas, 1000 ages before the birth of the first Brahmins, when the world existed in chaos and confusion when the Yugas had no time before the birth of Mahadeva (the great soul) before the appearance of day and night, before the birth of celestial beings and the sages, before the appearance of Satyasagara, before the appearance of water reservoirs such as tanks and lakes, when there were no roads, streets or lanes to towns and villages before the creation of the world, even before the coming into existence of man to be created by the spirit of Vishnu and before the Narayana' Ammevatu came into existence three eggs were laid by Ammevatu in the sea of milk one by one in three successive ages. The egg laid first got spoilt, the next filled with air and only the third was hatched. This egg had three compartments, from which came the Trimurti: Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. The lower half of the egg was transformed into the earth and the upper half became the sky. The king, who was the ancestor,

¹ Suryasagara - the ocean of truth.

² Narayana is the name used for human sacrifice. Narayana Ammevatu is the goddess worshipped by human sacrifice.

³ See above, p. 242.

the incarnation, of Vishnu, was fed on butter, Brahmā was made to live on turmeric, and Śiva was fed with the milk of Ammavaru. Then, as they grew up she made each of the gods put on his forehead characteristic religious marks, and finally built three towns, one for each to live in, and a fourth for herself.

This probably preserves a tradition of the relation of the popular Hindu religion of modern days to the older worship of the village deities. It is doubtless true that the Brahmins gained the victory over their enemies the Baktinats by borrowing largely from the pre-Aryan religions, which had a great hold over the masses of the people. This may be practically expressed by saying that Brahmā, Vishnu and Śiva sprang from an egg laid by a village deity and that she built for them the sacred cities which were the centres of their worship.

The goddess took special pains to protect her own city. She encased it with walls of bronze, brass, and gold, posted at the gates several thousand spirits of various sorts and among them, a barber, a washer man, and a potter. It seems odd to find these humble members of village society in such exalted company, but it is explained by the fact that they are the people who in many parts of South India take a prominent part in the sacrifices offered to the village deities at the annual festivals.

After a time, Ammavaru heard that the three kings, Brahmā, Vishnu and Śiva, were neglecting her worship, so she determined to enhance her power by destroying their towns. Her resolve was strengthened by an insult offered her by Śiva. The god one day called his servant and asked him why the people were neglecting the worship of Ammavaru, and was told in reply that they were calling on his name instead. He then bade his servant go to Ammavaru's town and abuse her which he did with a wail. When she heard of it she smiled grimly, 'summed her mountains,' and wailed very wrath. She then dressed herself up in a yellow cloth and yellow budice, put on copper jewels, a

silver waistband and tied a golden ornament on her forehead, took a deer in one hand, a crane in the other, a small drum in a third and put a snake round her body as a sacred thread. Thus attired she called a duster and down on the dais, and declared that her puka was neglected and she herself absent. After this little speech she started off to Iwagiri, the town of Iwara or Iwa, mounted on a yaksha, and accompanied with all kinds of weapons and parangas. Drums were sounded during the march. The investment of the town was a queer proceeding. Besides several kinds of animals, Ammevera created *Gange-Samans* (a fortified place with a ditch round it) and a sage to conduct the siege. The military operations of the sage were truly original. Seven *radrahtha** berries were placed on the ground, and on these seven *Radrahthas* a kind of board in which are marks said to resemble eyes, and on these needles were stuck to support tails of sacred snakes. Through these tails were driven steel spikes which supported a single-headed *radrahtha* berry with seeds of a sacred plant on the top. The sage then put his head on the seeds and raised his legs high up in the air. Birds built their nests on his nose feathers and bees made their homes in his nose plants of all kinds grew round him, and cobras made their shade in his arm pits. He remained silent and spoke to no one. What exactly the purpose or effect of these proceedings was does not appear.

* Iwa is often represented holding a deer by the hind legs in one hand and a crane in the other, in the other hand he frequently has a snake about his neck and waist and in his hair. The snake is one of Vishnu's symbols.

* The berry of the *Ammodendron Gaudinii* is called *radrahtha* and is used for making incense for the deities of Iwa.

* Iwa is usually represented as covered with sacred snakes, and his nose is said to be a source of their life and up the same way.

* He is said to be a very much respected deity. Among the various animals of Iwa are many kinds of snakes and the remaining animals in the province are all his devotees, birds, and men make their resting place in his shade only. The purpose of these practices is the gaining of wonderful miraculous power.

but apparently they were successful, as Ammavaru moved steadily on, and appointed her sister to keep people off the road, and then placed her sisters the hundred *laatas*,¹ to keep watch, and also a twelve-headed snake which coiled its body all round the town, keeping its hooded heads just opposite the gate and emitting poisonous fumes from its mouths. Then, as she went on in her triumphant march, a mountain was put on guard, forts were created, and Ammavaru descended from her jackal and sat on a throne. A horse was then brought her drums were beaten, what Shakespeare would call alarms and excursions took place and the sky was turned into a pebble and the earth into a mortar. After this general upset of the universe, Ammavaru made the dumb to sing her praises, created some tents with little demons inside who did pay to her and so finally arrived at Devagiri. Apparently this overwhelming display of military power and science at first crushed all resistance. The heads of the kings (Hishma Vishnu, and Śval) who refused to worship Ammavaru were cut off also the heads of seven other kings and then all put on again! One king's throne was made red hot like the fire in a potter's kiln, and his hair made all bloody while demons were set to watch the corpses of the slain. Then Ammavaru afflicted the unhappy citizens with many disasters and started off to attack four other kings. Drums were sounded as before and then a bloody battle ensued outside the walls of Devagiri. Horses and elephants were slain by Ammavaru one king felt a bad pain in his chest, as if pierced with arrows and pains in various parts of his body and died. Another king took a sword and plunged it into the body of a third king and both died. Then all the horses and elephants and kings died, and finally Ammavaru brought them all to life again, and they all began to worship her. A year after, drums were sounded again, and she marched with her army to a tamarind tree, where she slept for

¹ See p. 20 n. 1.

seven gadiyas (a gadi = 24 minutes) on a cotton mattress. Then nine kings, who had formerly worshipped Ammavaru gave up doing so, and changed the Vishnu marks on their foreheads for those of Śiva. This vexed Ammavaru so she threatened to annihilate the town of Devagiri and then swooned. When she came to, she took a basket with ut a rupa and some herbs and fruits transformed herself into an old woman and walked to Devagiri. The watchman of the town refused to help her put her baskets on her head, threatened to have her beaten, and abused her soundly. She caused a deep sleep to overpower him, tossed her baskets into the air, caught them on her head, and made her way to the gates of the town, which were guarded north, south, east, and west by four huge demons, with ten thousand crores¹ of men holding canes coloured green and seven hundred crores holding canes coloured red. A number of them were fast asleep but she roused them up and bade them open the gates, as she wanted to sell her tamarind and jack fruit in the town. One of them got up and told her that baskets with fruits and curds, beggars and mendicants, were not allowed in the town, and added that the people of the town were Lingayats,² people of true faith and good character. The goddess shouted, "O Śūdra sisters, living in the east street O Brāhman sisters of the western street, O Kamma sisters of the southern street, buy fruits from me. Old men eating my fruit will become young and young ones very handsome." The watchman was very angry at this and beat her with a green cane. The goddess threw down her basket, which caused a great earthquake. Then she first turned into a huge giantess and afterwards into a parrot, and said to the watchman. "You did not recognise me. You have forgotten my might. I will show my power." Ammavaru then disguised herself as a Lingayat dressed in a reddish-brown cloth, took a

¹ A crore is ten millions.

² See p. 73 n.

wooden pot in her hand, put sacred ashes on her forehead,¹ tied the symbol of Śiva² on every part of her body, sounded bells and concha, and, saying aloud, "Linga nama Śivāya," approached the gates of Devagiri once more. All the people were amazed at her devotion, prostrated themselves before her and offered a seat saying, "O worthy woman, where do you come from?" Ammaṇḍa replied, "I am coming from Yalapaṇam. My name is Yaṭi-dāri-paḍachu and I am coming from Chittalangī land. I am alone without relations in the world. I am a happy woman without a husband. Why do you come to Devagiri?" they asked. Ammaṇḍa replied that during the *brīta yaga*,³ i.e. the golden age, Parameśvara (i.e. the Supreme, here Śiva) became a slave to Pārvatī (wife of Śiva), that he was living in Devagiri, and she had come to pay her respects to him. The gate-keepers refused to admit her till she had told the story of Śiva and Pārvatī. The goddess then told the story as follows. On the wedding day of Śiva and Pārvatī the gold and silver bracelets were tied to their wrists, pearls were brought from the western ocean, festoons of fig leaves were hung up, and a cloth was stretched as a screen between Śiva and his bride. The faces⁴ of Brahmā were covered with safflower and twelve Vedas were read, but an inauspicious muhūrta, i.e. moment, was fixed and an inauspicious hour chosen for the ceremony. After tying the *ṭaṭi* (a small metal disk or ornament suspended by a thread, the mark of a married woman) round Pārvatī's neck Śiva put his foot on her foot, and she put her foot on his. Brahmā saw the shadow of Pārvatī's foot, was filled with unholy desires, and disturbed the ceremony by unseemly conduct. Śiva

¹ Śrīvāṭas wear sacred ashes smeared on the forehead in three lines. See p. 137.

² The phaṭṭa symbol, the lodge whence Lingayat.

³ Kṛta yaga to Śiva. The so-tar-as wood or waterwood.

⁴ The Hindu recognise a cycle of four ages, like the Greeks and Romans.

⁵ Brahmā is usually represented with four faces.

grew very angry about Bhishma and let off one of his heads. The head landed on Śiva's hand and remained immovable. So he went at once for a number of Brahmins and asked why he could not get it off. They told him that it was because he had committed murder, which is a most heinous crime and suggested that he should wander about as a beggar and make pilgrimages to Benares, Rameswaram and other sacred places and then receive amsa directly from the hands of Lakshmi (the wife of Vishnu). Śiva then disguised himself as a beggar and wandered far and wide and at last came to Lakshmi and said, "O Aśv Lakshmi!" Amsa. Amsa. She ordered her servants to take him alms but he refused to receive except of her hands and said that Lakshmi was his sister. Then Lakshmi had ordered that if he persisted and served him heretofore as at now the skull from Śiva's head to the ground. Śiva began to run away but the skull begged that some provision might be made for its future existence as it had lived in his hand for so many years. Lakshmi then moved Aśv's rights before Śiva and gave curry and rice to the skull which it brought to towards the north and he began to give praise muttering as it broke that something must be done for it. Śiva replied that it might take food of pregnant women, women during confinement and babies and that this would enable it to obtain worship and offerings.

Ammavara then related how she herself had desired marriage and gone to Vishnu, who sent her to Bhishma, who passed her on to Śiva. She danced before Śiva, who promised to grant her wish if she would give him the three valuable things she possessed—a rag, some bowl, jewels and a third eye. She gave them all to Śiva, who at once opened the third eye and returned her to Amma.¹ Then, filled with regret at the rash act

¹ Aśv means original, existing from the beginning.

² See above, p. 39.

³ Śiva is also represented with a third eye on vertically on his forehead. A Hindu will tell how he opened Lakshmi's third eye, and how with the opening of his third eye.

Śiva complimented the demon on his success but said that a female deity should not be brought into his presence. He commanded her to be tied to a red-hot pillar of glass and covered with iron hooks to peck at her. But no sooner was Ammavaru tied to the pillar than it became quite cool and the hooks of the crows dropped off. Seeing this the same worshippers of Śiva declared that the goddess was a powerful deity and determined to strike her all together on one side. But their upraised arms remained fixed in the air and they could not move them. Śiva then ordered Ammavaru to be tied to the feet of an elephant and dragged through the streets of the town, but as soon as she was tied to his feet the elephant became stiff and stood motionless as a pillar. Then Śiva said that she must be thrown on to a firing pan and fried like grain, so they took her up and threw her on to red-hot plates of glass, which at once became cool as water. Ammavaru grew wild with anger at this treatment, and, whirling round and round, became huge as a mountain, and then once more turned into a parrot, and addressed Śiva thus: 'O Śiva! I could not recognize you, but you will soon see my power. O rajan and princess! Now at last will you worship me?' The rajan and princess all cried out: 'O Ammavaru! We will not worship a female deity, we will not lift our heads and salute a goddess, we will not chant any other name except *Uṃga nama Śivāya*.' We will not think of you as a goddess. Ammavaru replied, 'Never mind my worship. I am a daughter of Kaṁṁgṛha. I was born in Valampuri. I was tied at North Varambathokk. I am living at Ujjanmanakā patnam. I was worshipped at Devagiri. I left Valampuri and came to rest at Ujjanmanakā for a time. There are many Śiva Nambas who used to worship me. They gave up wearing thuman marks (the religious mark of the Vairavantes on their foreheads) and took to sacred ashes (one of the Śivaitic marks). They are now

worshipping Śiva in Panchalinga. Bring them to me, and I will leave your town. The nine rajas replied that they would do nothing of the kind. Then Annamaya to her wrath threatened to destroy the town. Śiva declared that under no circumstances should she be worshipped as a goddess and that she might do her worst. Then Annamaya did her worst and greedily trampled the people from east to west cross flow over the town in vast Śaṅga. A strong wind arose and there was a storm of rain that lasted seven gautas (a gata = 24 minutes). The people caught colds, coughs, and fevers, small pox and other epidemics spread rapidly, horses, elephants, and camels were afflicted with disease, pregnant women suffered severe pains before childbirth, and their mothers died. For these seven gautas the town suffered terribly. All the gardens were destroyed, all flowers and plants were destroyed by white ants, all leaves by insects and bugs, all the trees and tanks were dried up. The dead bodies, heaped upon carts, were carried out by the northern gate to the burning ghāt five princesses returned, and at last the nine rajas rejoined and began to abuse Śiva. 'Betray the moon shines may your throne become red hot! May your married hair wet with Ganges water become red with blood. May your fortresses of Panchalinga take fire and burn! May your pot break into pieces! May your necklace snap asunder! May your nose held by your son as it is the middle! May you use the laugh on your head! May your gold and silver ornaments be bathed in blood. Śiva does not seem to have been a bit dismayed at this dreadful scene. He went to the gates of Lavangra and upon a golden chair and brought back to him all the corpses marked with the sacred ashes that were being taken out through the northern gate. The other corpses he left to their fate. Annamaya then began to think that Śiva must indeed be great, but determined to

* Śiva as the great dancer wears his hair matted, and the river Ganges takes Śiva upon his head from heaven.

put him to another test. She created a field of curved ponds, and while the plants assumed the form of human beings. Thinking some of these she took them together, put them in a jar and sent them to Śiva. The god threw some curved snakes on the jar and broke it with his own arm, the snakes became *śaṅgama* *śaṅgama* *śaṅgama*.

Hara Hara is the cry. When they asked the food they were told that they might wander over the country and would then get food in the shape of offerings and sacrifices. Amravati then went off with all her drums and instruments to Kashi, where she hoped to find three kings worshipping her. They all received her kindly treated her with great respect and worshipped her. Satisfied and content with this she returned to her own town of *Amravati*. There she saw some women about a hundred years of age with their hair and bodies becoming brown with oldness, began to cry, *śaṅgama* *śaṅgama*. The women asked their pain and she said she would do! The flowers for their weight in gold and by this means took away all the wealth of the town while the three kings were doing penance. Then the three kings came to the town of *Amravati* for further name for Amravati ruling as *śaṅgama* *śaṅgama* *śaṅgama* her garden. As they were picking the flowers, Amravati asked them and took them off to an open space where she had erected statues of gold, silver and diamonds and placed them in such a way that their heads could not touch and no fire would touch them. She then placed her statue, the *śaṅgama*, to guard the corpses, and then requested her enemies.

I have given the story almost exactly as it is told in the palm-leaf manuscript that was sent me to have copied. It is a very charming piece of mythology but the interest lies in the thought that it throws upon an obscure page in the history of *śaṅgama* life in India. We can see, beneath all its absurdity and extravagance,

the rise of a new form of religion side by side with the older cults of the village deities, the dislike that was felt by the upper classes for the worship of female deities, the struggle that took place between the old religion and the new, the varying phases of the conflict, the way in which disease and famine drove the masses back to the worship of their older deities, and then the drawn battle, as Śiva asserted his power and Ammavaru vanquished her enemies, and both continued to receive the worship of the people.

CHAPTER VIII

PROBABLE ORIGIN OF THE WORSHIP OF VILLAGE GODS

THE account given above of the rites and ceremonies connected with the worship of the village deities in South India does not pretend to be an exhaustive one. It would require many bulky volumes to enumerate the countless varieties of local use and custom prevailing in the different villages, and the result would be wear some in the extreme—but enough has been said, I think, to give a fair idea of the general nature and character of this phase of Hinduism, and to form a basis of comparison, on the one hand, between the cult of the village deities and the Brahmanical cults of Vishnu and Śiva, and, on the other hand, between the cults of village deities existing among the Telugus, Canarese, and Tamils, and, at any rate, this brief sketch of the religion of about 80 per cent of the Hindu population of South India may serve to dispel the idea that the people of India are, as a body, a race of philosophers, or that what is vaguely termed Hinduism is a system of refined philosophy in the purity of its morality and subtlety of its doctrines. Religious philosophy, undoubtedly, has played a great part in the development of the higher thought of the Indian people—but in South India, at any rate, the outlook of about 80 per cent of the population on the visible world in which they live, and the invisible world which borders closely upon it, and their ideas about God and religion are represented, not by Hindu philosophy, but by the worship of their grāma-devatās.

Considerable caution must be used in drawing con-

clinging from the striking resemblance between the ceremonies observed in the worship of village deities among the Telugus, Canarese and Tamils as the value of all evidence of this kind is largely diminished by the unifying influence of the great Vijayanagar empire. For about 250 years, from A D 1340 to A D 1565 the whole of South India was united under this great empire which had its capital on the Tungabhadra River, and formed the main bulwark of Hindoism against the advance of the Mohammedans. The capital itself was of vast extent and gathered together men and women of all races from every part of South India. It must have formed, therefore a great centre for the fusion of different ideas and customs and, when the City of Vijayanagar was captured and razed to the ground by the Mohammedans in A D 1565 Tamils, Telugus, and Canarese may well have carried home with them many new ideas and customs borrowed from one another. We cannot assume therefore that because a custom is widespread in the Tamil, Telugu or Canarese country now it was necessarily widespread before the foundation of the Vijayanagar empire. Allowing however for this possible borrowing of religious rites and ceremonies, the resemblances between the rites in all three countries are very striking. Such a curious ceremony as that of cutting off the right fore leg and putting it into the mouth of the victim which is found to exist all over the three countries in various villages and towns might possibly have been borrowed, but the general resemblance in type which underlies all local differences of custom, can hardly have been due to this cause, and the general impression left by a study of the various festivals and ceremonies in the three countries would be I think, that they all belong to a common system and had a common origin.

In the same way caution is needed in drawing conclusions from the resemblance between the worship of the village deities and the Brahmanical cults of Vishnu and Siva. The two systems of religion have existed side by side in the towns and villages for many centuries,

and the same people have largely taken part in both. Naturally therefore they have been well mixed from one another. In the Tamil country the influence of Brahmanism in the cult of the village deities is very extensive and it is more than probable that many ceremonies which originally belonged to the village deities have been adopted by the Brahman priests. It can be seen therefore we safely be drawn from the folklore which represents various village goddesses as in some way connected with Siva. It is quite possible that stories of this kind are simply due to a desire to connect the less dignified village deities with what was regarded as the higher form of worship controlled by the Brahmins. On the other hand the points of difference between the worship of the village deities and that of Siva and Vishnu, which have been noted in the introduction are very strongly marked, and clearly indicate that the two systems of religion are quite distinct. The village goddesses are purely local deities inflicting or warding off diseases and other calamities. They seem never to be regarded as having any relation to the world as a whole and their worship is the religion of ignorant and uneducated people whose thoughts do not travel beyond their own surroundings and personal needs while Siva and Vishnu represent a philosophic conception of great forces at work in the universe forces of destruction and preservation and their worship is a religion that could only have originated among men accustomed to philosophical speculation. They may have borrowed many ideas customs and ceremonies from the more primitive religions of the villages but the foundation and motive of the whole system are to be sought in the brain of the philosopher rather than in the fears and superstitions of uneducated villagers. At the same time it is also true that in many the Brahmanical system has sunk to lower depths than have been reached by the crude religion of the village people. The worship of the village deities contains much that is genuinely religious. The details of a further comparison

are horrid to read about, and still worse to witness, and the sight of a pujari parading the streets with the entrails of a lamb round his neck and its liver in his mouth would be to us disgusting and doubtless, there are much drunkenness and immorality connected with the village festivals while the whole system of religion is prompted by fear and superstition, and seems almost entirely lacking in anything like a sense of sin or feelings of gratitude towards a higher spiritual Power. But still it is also true that, setting aside a few local customs in the worship of the village deities, there is nothing in the system itself which is quite so morally degrading and repulsive as the Lingam worship of the Sevantes or the marriage of girls to the god and their consequent dedication to a life of prostitution among the Vaishnavites. If the worship of Śiva and Viṣṇu has risen to greater heights, it has also sunk to lower moral depths than the less intellectual and less aesthetic worship of the grāma-devatā.

What the origin of the village deities and their worship may have been, it is difficult to say. The system, as it now exists, combines many different ideas and customs, and has probably resulted from the fusion of various forms of religion. In the Tamil country there are many features in the worship of the village deities, which, obviously have been adopted from Brahmanism, e.g. the elaborate washing of the image, and the growing aversion to animal sacrifices. So in Mysore there are traces of sun-worship in the cult of Bimal Mari and there are many features in the system everywhere, which seem to be borrowed from the worship, or rather propitiation, of the spirits of the departed. But the system as a whole is redolent of the soil, and evidently belongs to a pastoral and agricultural community. The village is the centre round which the system revolves and the protection of the villagers the object for which it exists. At the same time, it is quite possible that the ultimate origin of many of the rites and ceremonies may be traced further back to a nomadic stage of society. Most of them have now entirely lost

their meaning and when the people are asked what a particular ceremony means—what is about in their usual reply is simply, it is custom. The custom and there are many details of the sacrifices which seem strangely inconsistent with the general idea and theory of the worship which is prevalent. The intention of all the worship and sacrifices seems to be to propitiate various spirits good and evil. And this is done by means of gifts which it is supposed, the spirits like or by ceremonies, which will please them. Some of the spirits are supposed to delight in bloodshed so animals are killed in their presence and sometimes even the blood is given them to drink or blood and rice are sprinkled over the heads and streets or thrown up in the air for them to eat. To the more refined goddesses or to the more male attendants, as Mahadeva, Vishnu, Brahma, etc., and humans are freely offered, because it is assumed that these gifts will reach their hearts and propitiate them. But a great deal of the ritual and many of the most striking ceremonies are quite inconsistent with this gift theory of sacrifice and the idea of propitiation, which is now assumed to be the one motive and purpose of the festivals. For instance one of the main features of the animal sacrifices is the varied application of the blood of the victims. Sometimes the blood is applied to the bodies of the worshippers themselves in their foreheads and breasts sometimes it is sprinkled in the inner and lower parts of the shrine, sometimes on the houses or cattle sometimes on the boundary stones sometimes it is mixed with rice and scattered over the streets or sprinkled all round the boundaries of the village lands. But what possible meaning could these various uses of the blood have according to the gift theory of sacrifice? (In this theory it would be interesting to see why it should be presented as is sometimes done at the shrine of the deity or even drunk as at Tekhampoly by the priest who represents the goddess but of these other uses of the blood the gift theory seems to furnish no adequate explanation. Or again, what possible meaning could the gift

theory suggest for the widespread custom of putting the entrails round the neck of the *pajari* and the liver in his mouth? It is not probable that such a custom as this originated without some reason or idea at the back of it but on the gift-theory it seems absolutely meaningless.

Or again, another leading feature of the worship is the sacrificial feast in various forms. Sometimes the feast takes place on the spot, in the compound of the shrine more often the carcass is taken home by the offerer for a feast in his own house. Sometimes it is a formal and ceremonious act as in certain villages of the Telugu country where five little *Mak* boys, called *Sarkhals*, or innocents, are fed with the flesh of the victim under cover of a large cloth, to keep off evil spirits or the evil eye. Here, again, the gift-theory seems quite inconsistent with the whole idea of the sacrificial feast. The explanation often given, that the *gaklem* consumes the essence or spirit (*Savam* or *Ave*) of the gifts while the worshippers take the material sustenance, is perhaps in accordance with the animistic idea found in other countries that, even for men, the important thing in their food is the soul stuff it contains rather than the outward, material part of it. But in any case this would still leave unexplained the fact that the eating of the flesh by the worshippers is in many cases regarded as a religious act and as an important part of the sacrifice like the feast on the victims offered in the peace offerings under the Jewish law. On the other hand the sacrificial feast finds a natural and ready explanation if we assume that the system originated in the desire for communion with the spirit world and not in the idea of propitiation.

Herr Warneck when describing the Animism of the *Bataks* of Sumatra in his book, *The Living Forces of the Gospel* points out that most of the ceremonies connected with heathen sacrifices and a large number of heathen superstitions generally have their origin in the fundamental idea underlying all animistic religions, that not only living creatures and organisms but even

lifeless things share in a universal soul or a soul stuff that pervades everything in the world. The vital question for the Animist, he says, is how to place his own soul in relation to the souls surrounding him, and to their powers which are partly inimical and and partly useful, with as little danger and as much advantage to himself as possible. What must I do to protect and enrich my soul? That is the cardinal question of the animistic catechism. The main object of eating the flesh of an animal, therefore, is to absorb this soul stuff and appropriate the special virtue which belongs to the animal. The flesh of an animal that is eaten produces an effect on man corresponding to the animal in question. The flesh of the stag gives nobleness. Lemmings are made to devour caribou in order to assimilate their fierceness. Javanese thieves carry with them crow bones to be as clever as stealing as crows. And Herr Warneck is probably right in thinking that this is the explanation of Cannibalism. It is not an act of ferocity or revenge still less of epicureanism, since the Bantians do not human flesh so much that they even make them sick. But it is supposed that in eating a man's flesh the eater appropriates the other's soul. And in accordance with this idea those parts of the body in which the soul-power is supposed to be concentrated, the liver, the pancreas, the head, the sinews and the flesh of the head are specially prized. To the same idea we may trace the horrid custom of drinking the blood of victims offered in sacrifice, which is so common in South India, and the various uses of the blood described in chapter III. The soul stuff, says Herr Warneck, has special vigour in the blood, and it is repeatedly stated in the Jewish law with reference to the sacrificial victims that "the blood is the life."

It can readily be seen how easily in primitive times these animistic ideas gave rise to that particular form of Animism which is generally known as Totemism. In the medium stage society consists of tribes or clans, the members of which are akin to one another or of

any rate, are assumed to be united by ties of blood relationship. All the members of the clan, then, are blood relations, and are bound together as members of one family for mutual help and protection. The normal attitude of every clan towards other clans is one of suspicion, hostility and war and this constant pressure of hostile clans compels each individual clan, not only to maintain its unity and brotherhood, but, if possible, to enlarge its limits and add to its numbers. It becomes possible to do this by a convenient extension of the idea of blood relationship. If a man is not one of the clan by birth he can be made one by in some way, being made a partaker of its blood. In his *Introduction to the History of Religion* Mr. Jevons quotes several instances of this from different parts of the world, in both ancient and modern times. The following examples from Africa will suffice to illustrate the custom —

The exchange of blood is often practised amongst the chiefs of Africa as a token of alliance and friendship. The Marabotto people, after having obtained a small vessel upon which there is some red grease, each pretend to drink from the same, and so to share equally the portion of power which berries into the blood and with them. Amongst the Hamites the proceedings are somewhat different. The operators armed with short knives scoop from the head of one person and the blood of another. The most curious is which has last operation is performed to denote that the two parties are bound in a form of everlasting friendship and a guarantee of good faith, popular with all the Upper Congo tribes, he proceeds. An example was made to both our right arms in the case of a Hamite chief, just before the above and as the blood flowed in a stream, he hurried to sprinkle powder on his hands and push on his wife, leaving the other, in rapid motion, to appear to us, and as she had the quantity of blood which an enemy's arm had gathered together so that the flowing blood intermingled we were declared to be brothers of blood and whose interest henceforth should be united as our blood now was."

These examples will suffice to illustrate the widespread idea that the actual drinking or application of the blood of a clan will create a blood relationship and alliance among men, who are not actually members of

the same family. But the human clan in its struggle for existence found itself surrounded, not only by other human clans, but also by various tribes of animals, which it looked upon as analogous to the clan of men, and it desired to strengthen its position by an alliance with one or another of these animal clans, which, for some reason, impressed itself upon its imagination as animated by some supernatural power. The animal clan then became what is now called the totem of the human clan, and the spirit that was supposed to animate the totem clan became, in a certain sense, an object of worship. One great purpose of the sacrifice, then, was to cement and strengthen the alliance between the human clan and the animal clan, and the way in which this was done was through some application of the blood of the totem or by in some way coming into contact with that which was specially connected with it, or by partaking of its flesh. The object, then, of killing a member of the totem tribe becomes clear. Under ordinary circumstances it would be absolutely forbidden, and regarded as the murder of a kinsman, but on special occasions it was solemnly done in order to shed the blood and partake of the flesh, and so strengthen the alliance. The blood is regarded as the life, and when the blood of a member of the totem tribe of animals was shed, the life of the totem was brought to the spot where it was needed, and the blood could be applied to the worshippers as a bond of union, and thus the union could be still further cemented by the feast upon the flesh, by which the spirit of the totem was absorbed and assimilated by its human kinsmen. The object of the animal sacrifice, therefore, was not in any sense to offer a gift, but to obtain communion with the totem spirit.

Now if we apply this theory of sacrifice to the sacrifices offered to the village deities in South India, we see that the main ceremonies connected with them at once become intelligible. The various modes of sprinkling and applying the blood and the different forms of the sacrifices, least were all originally intended

to promote communion with the spirit that was worshipped. In the same way, even such a ceremony as the wearing of the entrails round the neck, and putting the liver in the mouth, acquires an intelligible meaning and purpose. The liver and entrails are naturally connected with the life of the animal, and the motive of this repulsive ceremony would seem to be an intense desire to obtain as close communion as possible with the object of worship by wearing those parts of its body that are specially connected with its life. So, too, this theory explains why the animal sacrificed is so often treated as an object of worship. In the case of the buffalo sacrifices in the Telugu country, as we have seen, the buffalo is paraded through the village, decked with garlands and smeared with turmeric and kunkuma, and then, as it passes by the houses, people come out and pour water on its feet, and worship it. But why should this be done if the animal sacrificed is regarded as only a gift to the goddess? When, however, we realise that the animal sacrificed was not originally regarded as a gift but as a member of the totem tribe and the representative of the spirit to be worshipped, the whole ceremony becomes full of meaning.

Then, again, this theory of the origin of sacrifice supplies a very plausible and intelligible explanation of the origin of the use of stones and images to represent the village deities in India. At first sight it seems a complete mystery why a common ordinary stone should be regarded as representing a god or goddess. Most of the stones used for this purpose in South Indian villages have absolutely nothing that is peculiar or distinctive about them. Often they are simply stone pillars of varying heights, and a large number are only small, conical stones, not more than six or seven inches high. Some, again, are flat slabs with figures carved on them in bas-relief and others are regular images. The images and uncarved bas-reliefs we can understand, but how could these ordinary stones and stone-pillars have ever come to be regarded as the representatives of spiritual beings? The theory of

sacrifice connected with incenseburn offerings, at any rate a possible and intelligible explanation. The totem animal was killed in order to shed the blood, and on some the presence of the totem deity at a particular spot, which then became sacred or Taboo. To violate it would be a grievous offence. Accordingly the spot was marked by a simple heap of stones or by an upright stone pillar which would perhaps be sprinkled with the blood. Then, as totemism gradually died out and gave place to higher religious ideas and anthropomorphic conceptions of deity the old totemistic conception of sacrifice became obscured and the animal that was killed was regarded no longer as the representative of the object of worship, but as a gift to the deity. At the same time the sanctity of the spot became associated with the stones originally set up to mark the place of sacrifice and so in time the stone pillar itself became sacred and came to be treated as the symbol of the deity to whom the sacrifice was offered when the heap of stones developed into the sacred altar. We can probably trace our stage of this process of evolution in the ideas now connected with the boundary-stones of Israel. No doubt it was once surmised that stones placed to mark the spot on the boundary of the village lands where the sacrifice was offered. Then the stone became sacred, and the idea grew up that it was inhabited by the spirit who was worshipped. There however the process of evolution stopped and the stone is not now regarded like the other stones, as representing the deity, but simply as her abode.

Probably the other stones were once regarded in exactly the same light and then advanced a step further and became representatives of the deity worshipped. The next step, to the carved human figures, whether bas-reliefs or complete images would be easy and natural when once the deity had been conceived no longer as the spirit of a whole species of animals, but as an individual human being.

When this change in religious ideas took place must of course be a matter of conjecture, but it probably

coincided with the change from the nomadic to the settled pastoral and agricultural life, when the wandering clan developed into the village community, and the superiority of man to the lower animals had been definitely established.

Similarly, it is possible that the connexion between the growth of agriculture and the origin of village communities and so also of village deities, may account for the fact that the village deities of South India are almost always females.

All over the world the earth spirit is regarded as female and the presiding deities of agriculture are mainly goddesses, because the idea of fertility and reproduction is connected with women. When, therefore, a nomadic pastoral clan settled down to an agricultural life in villages, they would naturally worship the earth spirits of the village lands as goddesses rather than as gods.

The fact, too, that agriculture among primitive races was the business of women rather than of men, as it is among savage races at the present day probably led to the village goddesses being at first worshipped by the women rather than by the men. One trace of this is still found in the custom of the *Mālā pījari*, who is a man, dressing up as a woman when he sits in the cart with the animals impaled alive all around him, and is dragged in procession through the village,¹ as well as in the prominent part taken by women in some places in the waving of the *krati*.²

These theories as to the origin of the village deities, of idolatry and of animal sacrifice in South India, can, of course be regarded only as hypotheses. But, when we consider that the totemistic theory is able to furnish a plausible explanation of the crude form of idolatry which exists in many villages, and of many features in the sacrificial rites, which seem quite inconsistent with the existing ideas of sacrifice, we see that there is sufficient evidence to justify its adoption

¹ See above, p. 30.

² See above, p. 30.

as a working hypothesis. And there can be no doubt that the ceremonial observed in these sacrifices gives very substantial support to the theory, that the original idea of sacrifice was not that of a gift to the deity but communion with a supernatural power. And, if that is true, then we may see, even in these primitive rites, a foreshadowing of far higher forms of religious belief and practice. The mysterious efficacy attributed to the sprinkling of the blood might almost be regarded as an unconscious prophecy of the Christian doctrine of the Atonement, while the whole ritual of the sacrifices, even in its crudest and most revolting forms, bears witness to that instinctive craving after communion with God, which finds its highest expression and satisfaction in the sacramental system of the Christian Church.

CHAPTER IX

SOCIAL, MORAL, AND RELIGIOUS INFLUENCE OF THE SYSTEM

THE results of this system of religion might at first seem to be wholly degrading intellectually, morally, and spiritually. It appears on the surface to be a religion of fear and superstition, finding its outward expression in mean, ugly symbols and in forms of worship that are to a very large extent disgusting and even immoral. The account of a village festival in the Telugu country reads like mere malummer madness—many of the rites in which an male are impaled or buried alive are revolting in their cruelty—and the animal sacrifices with their crude butchery and coarse bloodshed bear witness to a low and unworthy conception of deity. Whatever may have been the origin of these animal sacrifices in prehistoric times, they are now regarded by the worshippers simply as a means of appeasing the deity's wrath by satisfying her lust for blood. In the ancient Jewish sacrifices there may have been the same amount of bloodshed and butchery when on such an occasion as the dedication of the Temple at Jerusalem 'King Solomon offered a sacrifice of twenty and two thousand oxen and a hundred and twenty thousand sheep,' but the Jewish sacrifices symbolised great moral and spiritual truths—the victim represented the worshipper, the killing of the animal and the offering of the blood expressed the consecration of the worshipper's own life to God—in the sin offering and the peace offering the presentation of the blood and the feast on the flesh were symbolical of penitence for sin and communion with God. But in the sacrifices to the village deities

in India at the present day there are no traces of these higher ideas in the minds of the worshippers. There is no penitence for sin, no thought of the consecration of human life to a just and holy God, but simply the desire to appease the ill temper of a vengeful spirit by an offering of blood. And even in untidy offerings of fruit, camphor and incense to the more refined and respectable of the goddesses, who are supposed to be shocked by the sight of blood, the idea of sacrifice does not rise above the conception of a propitiatory gift. It is the kind of offering that is made to the local policeman or a tyrannical government official to secure his favour. And in almost all the festivals held in honour of the village deities there is a wild orgiastic excitement, and often a sad amount of drunkenness and immorality that is most degrading. So, too, there is nothing morally elevating in the conception formed of the characters of the deities themselves. They have not even the grandeur of such a deity as Śiva. Śiva may be terrible and cruel, but at any rate there is something grand and majestic about him. He represents a world force. He is an interpretation of the universe and the embodiment of a philosophy. But the village deity is nothing more than a petty local spirit tyrannising over or protecting a small hamlet, occasionally venting her spite or her ill temper on a handful of poor villagers. She inspires fear because of her power to do grievous harm by inflicting disease and injuries on man and beast when she is offended, but she has no relation to the universe or even to the world. She is the product of fear untouched by philosophic reflection. So she does not draw out any feelings of wonder and admiration, still less of love and gratitude, nor does she lead her worshippers on to any higher ideals of morality.

Taking the system therefore as a whole as it exists at the present day we can only condemn it from a moral and religious point of view as a debasing superstition, and the only attitude which the Christian Church can possibly take towards it as a working system is one

of uncompromising hostility, the same attitude that the Jewish prophets of old took to the local Semitic cults in Palestine with all their idolatrous and immoral associations. In the writings of Hindu philosophers and poets there are many noble and inspiring thoughts, but there is nothing in the vast jungle of beliefs and practices that have grown up during the course of ages around the worship of the village deities that the Christian Church could wish to preserve. The first step towards any religious progress in the villages of South India is to cut down this jungle of beliefs and practices, rites and ceremonies, and clear the ground for the teaching and worship of the Christian Church. When the Outcastes of a village in the Telugu country become Christians, they very often level the shrine of their local deity to the ground and build a Christian prayer house on the site. That expresses the general attitude of Christianity to the whole system.

At the same time we must not allow the corruptions of the system at the present day, with all its debasing rites and its low and petty views of the deity, to blind us to its social and religious value in past ages, or to the deeper spiritual feelings and instincts which it has feebly striven to express. In the first place the worship of the village deities has maintained a silent protest on behalf of religious and social equality. Feeble and ineffective as the protest may be, still it is a protest that is not without its value. In the worship of the village deities there is no priestly caste. The Brahman is nowhere; the *pūjāris* may belong to any caste; the leading part in the buffalo sacrifice is nearly always taken by the Outcastes; the folklore of the village deities and the songs chanted at the sacrifices give hints of a time when the Outcastes aspired to equality with the Brahmins, and the large number of people from the different Śūdra castes who take part in the sacrifices form a striking witness to what we should call in the Christian Church the priesthood of the laity. It is a feeble flickering light shining in a dark place, like the

witness borne to the equality and brotherhood of man at the temple of Jagannath in Orissa, where all castes, including the Brāhmana, eat together. Still the witness has been maintained through the long centuries of caste tyranny and perhaps it has had more influence than we imagine in keeping alive in the hearts of the depressed classes some slight feeling of self-respect and a sense of their own worth in the community. It is something to be proud of that when the terrible calamity of cholera or small-pox threatens the life of the village, the calamity cannot be averted without their help. If they cannot feel that they are respected, the next best thing is to feel that in times of trouble they are needed.

Then, in the second place, deep down in the system, buried beneath a mass of traditional rites that have lost their meaning, there is still the instinctive craving of the human heart for communion with God. This instinctive feeling after God has indeed been degraded by unworthy and petty ideas of the spiritual world, it has been distorted by fear and superstition. It has found expression in weird and horrid forms, but still, in spite of all corruptions and distortions, we can discern in it, not merely a belief in a spirit world but a desire to come into personal communion with spiritual beings. In the previous chapter it has been shown that the original idea underlying the system of animal sacrifice was that of communion rather than that of propitiation and, though at the present day propitiation by acceptable gifts is undoubtedly the dominant idea in these sacrifices and offerings, still the idea of communion is not wholly lost. The *pūjārī* is often regarded as possessed and inspired by the deity, and the sprinkling of the blood of the victim on the houses, the fields and the persons of the worshippers is regarded as a means of securing the presence and protection of the deity. While, therefore, the methods of communion are all wrong, and the conception of the deity with whom communion is sought is hopelessly inadequate and perverted, still, in the

simple desire for communion with a deity of some sort, there is a germ and root of true religious feeling which craves for expression. It is pathetic to notice how real is the desire among many of the more religious men and women in the villages even among the depressed classes, to see God. I have often met with and heard of men who have spent what are for them large sums of money and undergone much hardship to satisfy this desire. We must not undervalue this rudimentary religious feeling and if in the worship of the village deities, it has for many centuries been feeding on carrion, perhaps it is better for it to feed on carrion than to die of starvation.

Then, again, the belief in the village deities has undoubtedly fostered an attitude of mind towards the spiritual world which is to a certain degree a preparation for the Gospel. It has made men feel a sense of dependence on spiritual beings. The mental attitude of the ordinary villager is the very antithesis of materialism or agnosticism. He has a very vivid belief that the world in which he lives is surrounded by unseen spiritual beings, and in all times of trouble he feels intensely his dependence on his village deity for help and protection. And even where the village deity is conceived of as an ill tempered, revengeful being, the fear which she inspires is not a bad preparation for a belief in a God of love. The experience of most evangelists among the Outcastes of South India would be I think that their fear of evil spirits is one reason why the doctrine of an omnipotent God of infinite love appeals to them with so much force. It makes them realise their need of help. It does for them what the fear of powerful and malicious enemies did for the Jewish people of old. The Jewish Psalms show how closely the need of protection from powerful enemies was bound up with the deepest religious feelings of the chosen people. The need of protection against evil spirits is playing a similar part in the religious development of the villagers of South India.

The Christian Church thus brings to the villagers,

and especially to the Outcastes, three great truths which their belief in the village deities specially prepares them to accept

(a) First, the truth of the existence of an omnipotent God of infinite love, the creator and the ruler of the universe, and the Father of all mankind, a truth which stands out in vivid and startling contrast to their belief in a multitude of evil or ill tempered spirits always ready to do them grievous harm, with no superior power to control them

(b) Second, the truth of the universal redemption from sin and the great gift of direct, personal access to an almighty, all loving God through Jesus Christ. This truth stands in equally striking contrast to the poor and miserable communion with a petty local deity offered through the blood of their animal sacrifices. To compare great things with small it is as though a poor villager suffering from the persecution of a petty local official were suddenly told that he had free right of access to the kind and powerful collector of the district. The good news of free access to God is a real Gospel of freedom

(c) And thirdly, there is the great truth of the equality of all men in God's sight and the universal brotherhood of man. It is a truth very dimly foreshadowed in the rites of their primitive cult, but in the Christian Church it stands out as the very essence of the Gospel message. And it is a truth that makes a powerful appeal to the hearts of the downtrodden and depressed.

Thus, while the cult of the village deities provides little foundation of belief or practice on which the Christian Church can build, on the other hand it has kept alive a sense of deep spiritual needs, which Christianity alone can satisfy. It certainly brings religion down into the every-day life of the people. The ordinary villager of South India does nothing without offering prayer to the village deity while the shrines and symbols that are scattered all over the countryside keep constantly before his mind the

existence of a spiritual world. However poor and degraded his ideas of deity may be, at any rate they are to him a profound reality, and this sense of the reality and importance of the spiritual world is not a bad foundation for the Christian Church to build upon.

APPENDIX I

ON THE CEREMONY OF THE OPENING OF THE MOUTH IN THE FUNERAL RITES OF ANCIENT EGYPT

There is an interesting parallel to the practice of cutting off the right foreleg and putting it in the mouth of the buffalo (described on page 51) in the ancient funeral ceremonies connected with the cult of Osiris in Egypt. The legend ran that, after Osiris had been murdered by his brother Set, his son Horus sought out his body, in order to raise it to life, and, when he found it, he unloosed the bandages so that Osiris might move his limbs and rise up. Under the direction of Thoth, Horus recited a series of formulas, as he presented offerings to Osiris, and he and his sons and Anubis performed the ceremonies which opened the mouth and nostrils, and the eyes and ears of Osiris. This opening of the mouth was one of the regular funeral rites in ancient Egypt.

There is a book found in tombs called the Book of the Opening of the Mouth, and in a British Museum bulletin, entitled *The Book of the Dead*, written by Mr. E. A. Wallis Budge, it is said that, on the upper margins of the insides of coffins, there are frequently given two or more rows of coloured drawings of the offerings which under the fifth dynasty were presented to the deceased or his statue during the celebration of the service of "Opening the Mouth." In one of the illustrations the ceremony of Opening the Mouth is shown as being performed on the mummy of a royal scribe. In the picture there is a calf walking in front of its mother with its left foreleg cut off, and in front of the calf are two slaves, one with the heart of the

deceased in his hand, and the other holding the left foreleg of the calf, which is apparently being placed upon a table. It is not clear what part the foreleg plays in the ceremony of the "Opening of the Mouth," but there is an obvious resemblance between this ancient ceremony in Egypt and the widespread custom in South India mentioned above. The Egyptian ceremony suggests that one object of putting the foreleg in the mouth in the case of sacrifices in India is to keep it open and enable the spirit of the animal to go in and out.

We give in Plate XVIII a photograph of a buffalo sacrifice carried out by the servants of Dr. Hunt of Secunderabad. The scene is the garage in which his motor bicycle stands. Round it the servants have grouped his sword, the gardener's shears, a baby's chair, a tea-kettle, etc., and to these the sacrifice was made. In the right foreground lies the body of the buffalo, to the left its head with the right foreleg in its mouth, while between the head and the bicycle may be seen a bottle of liquor and various other offerings.

APPENDIX II

ON THE USE OF IRON TO DRIVE AWAY EVIL SPIRITS

A curious custom connected with the worship of Mariamma was brought to my notice by Dr Hunt of Secunderabad. An Indian friend of his came across it in a village of the Bellary district in the Telugu country. The villagers hold a festival in honour of the goddess Mariamma every year and offer the usual sacrifices. In 1917 there was a very severe epidemic of influenza in the district, so a special festival was held to appease the wrath of the goddess. A wooden bust of her was made with arms akimbo and sacrifices were duly offered to it. Thousands of people came from neighbouring villages for the occasion, to do puja and make their offerings. On the following night the image was placed on a small wooden cart about three feet high, and taken in procession to a place outside the village. The head of each family then came and drove an iron nail into the image, till it was dotted all over with nails. A goat was then sacrificed and the blood sprinkled over the goddess, after which the image and the cart were covered over with a red cloth and left in the field. A rough drawing of the nail-filled image is reproduced in Plate XVIII. The explanation of this ceremony given by the villagers themselves was that the nails were driven in to the goddess to attract her attention and induce her to be kind to each family and protect them against the disease. It seems an odd way of doing it, and probably the real meaning of the ceremony in prehistoric times was somewhat different. It is a very old and wide-spread idea that malignant spirits are afraid of iron, and it is possible that the hammering

of the nails into the goddess was originally intended to put the fear of iron into her and drive out of her the evil temper. The villagers do not now connect the practice with black magic (*śāśanam*) but the original idea may have been in some way connected with it. But whatever the origin, it throws an interesting light on the driving of nails into the famous Hindenburg statue in Berlin during the war. Evidently this is a survival of an old pagan custom dating back to a remote antiquity.

It is a common belief among all castes in Malabar¹ that lonely places, such as cremation grounds, the sides of tanks or groves of tamarind trees, are haunted by "pisachas" or evil spirits. At about the middle of the night these evil spirits are supposed to roam about their haunts with the intention of possessing those who chance to pass their way. People who say that they have seen the demon give us to understand that it has the form of a woman, and less often of a man, while others say that its form is too fearful to describe, attesting that, if they could believe their eyes, they saw a hideous and most appalling figure towering right up to the skies. Men are much afraid to pass through such places between nine p.m. and three a.m., but feel themselves safe when they have sharp iron weapons with them. It is supposed that the devil is afraid of iron and goes away in a fright. A man versed in magic, when he has to walk through such places, draws a cabalistic figure on the earth, and inscribes on it some mystical letters. At the centre of the figure he plunges the pointed end of an iron knife or peg. Having done this, he feels quite secure from the baneful influence of evil spirits.

Sometimes a house is believed to be haunted by some of these aerial beings. When calamities come thick upon the inmates of a house, it is a certain sign that it is possessed by evil spirits. In such a case the

¹ These notes about Malabar were kindly given me by one of the assistants of the Government Museum, Madras.

emancipator is sent for. He comes and studies the situation of the house and the position of the doors and windows and such. Having got a thorough knowledge of it he is able to say which way the devil comes and goes. A suitable order is sent out according to the time of day and on men and women into the earth at that order. The devils tremble and by such an act and the hunter also sees that he has nothing more to fear from demonic influences.

To get rid of the devil that has possessed a man or a woman, the following method is very common and is resorted to. A wooden image of the person under the power of the evil spirit is made and a square hole made in it just above the neck. The wood selected for this purpose is as a rule that of the palm-tree, i.e. *edraecus alberti*. This is done according to the name of the devil. Then, by the recitation of certain magical words, the essence of the person afflicted with the devil's spirit is transferred to the wooden image. The idea of passing a hole in the image seems to me to be to create an opening or entrance in the image through which the essence of the person can be transferred out. There might also be another idea, that such an image should not be perfect in every part. The image is then taken to a tree that has plenty of milky latex in it and nailed to it. The tree selected for such purposes is palm-tree, i.e. *edraecus alberti*, *graydonia* or *twoa religiosa*, or *schumacheria* or *carapa arborea*. The spirit no longer possesses the person but possesses the tree.

In the Madras Museum there are two large wooden images, over five feet high, studded all over with wooden nails. The first a life-size rude female human figure with feet turned backwards carved out of the wood of *edraecus alberti* was washed ashore at Calcutta in 1873. It probably came from the Laccadive Islands some of whose residents are famous sorcerers. The figure probably represented a woman possessed by an evil spirit. By means of magic rites and the driving in of the nails the people believe they had nailed up the spirit in the image and then threw it

into the sea. The other figure was found at Tellicherry. Arabic characters, doubtless regarded as of great magic potency, are carved all over the figures.

The use of iron to scare away evil spirits is very common among the Chamārs in North India.¹

¹ Briggs, *The Chamārs*, 142.

GLOSSARY OF INDIAN TERMS

As only brief definitions are possible here, a reference is given in each case to the page on which the term is explained. Names of deities are not included. They may be found in the indices.

abhishegam — anointing, washing, 92.

adi — original, 133.

ananta or *ananta* — a feminine termination, 23.

arali — a lamp of rice flour, 39.

araka — a native intoxicant, 49.

Aradis — priests of the Mā.śa, 44.

ashta fakṣa — the eight powers of the universe, 30.

avātāra — incarnation, 26.

bali — offering, 82.

bali karana — presentation of the offering, 63.

bataṣa — bull or ox, 125.

bharat — a fallen woman consecrated to a deity, 45.

betel — a pepper plant, 39.

bhadrāḥṭi — a kind of bead, 129.

bodha veyo — navel stone, 60.

Brahman — the highest Hindu caste, 19.

Chakras — a section of the Outcastes, 81.

Chandala — an Outcaste, 84.

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